

## OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2016”*

Space Subcommittee Hearing

April 16, 2015

Good morning, and welcome Administrator Bolden. I look forward to your testimony, and I thank you for your continued service to this nation.

As the Chairman has indicated, we are here to review NASA’s Fiscal Year 2016 budget request. Before I discuss specifics, I would like to say that I appreciate the President’s commitment to NASA as expressed in this budget request, as well as his support for R&D overall. It is clear that he understands the importance of investing in our nation’s R&D enterprise, of which NASA is a key component. So while I may differ on some of the specific funding decisions reflected in this budget request, I think that NASA’s overall request is a good starting point for our deliberations—and I hope that Congress will at least equal that budgetary top line, if not exceed it. Because the reality is that successive Congresses and Administrations have tasked NASA with a number of critically important endeavors, yet we have lagged in providing the resources needed to carry them out. The truth is that NASA’s “buying power” has actually decreased by 15 percent from Fiscal Year 2005 to Fiscal Year 2013 and is expected to continue to decline if the budgetary outlook doesn’t improve. Mr. Chairman, the hardworking women and men of NASA deserve better.

Let me cite an example. Just about a year ago, a distinguished panel of the National Academies completed its review of the nation’s human space exploration program. The panel was headed by former governor and OMB Director Mitch Daniels, an individual well known for his fiscal conservatism. Which makes the panel’s conclusions even more impressive, namely: America’s human spaceflight program is worth continuing, Mars is the appropriate goal, the government needs to come to a consensus on a pathway to Mars—that is, a set of interim destinations and milestones—and it’s going to require funding above constant dollars if NASA is to succeed.

That’s pretty unambiguous advice.

So it came as a bit of a shock to me that the very next budget request for NASA to be submitted after the report’s release would actually propose cutting the funding for the Space Launch System and Orion, two fundamental enabling elements of the human exploration program. It’s directly counter to the National Academies’ findings, and I think Congress needs to correct that.

Neither has NASA yet told us how it plans to get to Mars—what’s the pathway or roadmap? NASA needs to look beyond just the next four or five years and lay out the milestones it needs to pursue to get humans on Mars. As the National Academies panel made clear, defining such a roadmap is not just for NASA’s benefit. Congress and the American people will need to be confident that NASA has a well thought-out plan if we are going to be able to sustain support for such an ambitious undertaking over the coming years.

There are other examples in the budget request that I could cite as areas of concern: the cuts made to NASA’s Education program, to Aeronautics, and to Planetary Science, among others. However, I am sure we will discuss them further during the hearing, so I won’t pursue them here. Instead, I will close by

saying again what I have said many times already: NASA is a crown jewel of America's research and development enterprise. It advances knowledge, promotes technological innovation, projects a positive image of America throughout the world, and inspires. Its workforce is dedicated and accomplished. NASA deserves our support.

Thank you, and I yield back the remainder of my time.