

OPENING STATEMENT

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

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 4412, the “National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2014”

April 29, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I will be relatively brief in my opening remarks so that we can move quickly to consideration of the Manager’s Amendment, at which time I will have a few additional comments.

I have made no secret of the fact that I consider NASA to be a key element of our nation’s research and development enterprise. NASA drives technological innovation and scientific advancement. It is also a very positive symbol throughout the world of American ingenuity and our “can do” spirit. Finally, NASA has long been a source of inspiration to our young people, firing them up to pursue the STEM disciplines that will be critical to our future competitiveness.

That is why I consider reauthorizing NASA to be one of our Committee’s most significant legislative responsibilities. And that is why I am pleased that after some initial missteps, this Committee is addressing that responsibility with a good bipartisan bill—something that has long been a hallmark of this Committee.

The bill before us with its accompanying Manager’s Amendment has many good features. I will not attempt to discuss all of them now. Instead I would just note several key elements of the bill and Manager’s amendment. First, it makes clear that NASA is and should remain a multi-mission agency, with a balanced portfolio of programs in space and Earth science, aeronautics, and human space flight and exploration. It provides a challenging goal for the nation’s human exploration program and supports the development of the SLS and Orion vehicles needed to carry out that program.

H.R. 4412 and its Manager’s amendment contain provisions that will help promote productive Earth and space science, fundamental space life and physical sciences, International Space Station research, aeronautics research, and space technology development. There are also provisions to help strengthen NASA’s education and public outreach activities.

Finally, there are a number of “good government” provisions to ensure that the taxpayer dollars invested in NASA are used effectively.

Mr. Chairman, this bill and Manager's Amendment are by no means perfect. For example, I remain disappointed that it was not possible to provide funding guidance to NASA for Fiscal Year 2015 and beyond, because I think that as authorizers we need to provide the funding required to carry out the important tasks we have given the agency. However, I do believe that the bill as amended by the Manager's Amendment is a good bill, and it is one I can support.

Before I close, I would like to express my appreciation to Ms. Edwards and our staff for working with me to ensure that we would have a good bill coming out of today's markup. And I would like to thank Chairman Smith and Space Subcommittee Chairman Palazzo and their staff for their willingness to work cooperatively with us so that we could attain the positive outcome I anticipate at today's markup.

With that, I urge support for H.R. 4412 as amended by the Manager's amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.