

**Statement of  
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before the  
Committee on Science & Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**FY 2008 Budget Hearing**

**March 15, 2007**

Chairman Gordon, Ranking Member Hall, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss NASA's \$17.3 billion FY 2008 budget request. This request demonstrates the President's commitment to our Nation's leadership in space exploration, scientific discovery, and aeronautics research, and I ask for your support in obtaining it.

I have testified before this committee many times--when I worked for NASA in the early 1990s, as a private citizen, and now as NASA Administrator--and I learn something new every time. The portraits on the walls of this room with Tiger Teague, George Brown, Bob Walker, Jim Sensenbrenner, and Sherry Boehlert speak to us even today.

In March 2003, in the wake of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* accident, former Science Committee chair Bob Walker addressed the annual gathering of the Goddard Memorial Dinner with the following observation: "In every generation,

choices are made that lead to greatness or mediocrity.” There was a strategic choice facing our nation’s space program—whether and how to continue our nation’s human spaceflight program.

Soon thereafter, the Columbia Accident Investigation Board decided they needed to analyze both the root causes and systemic reasons behind the Space Shuttle *Columbia* accident. They held up our nation’s space policy for all to see, and observed: “The U.S. civilian space effort has moved forward for more than 30 years without a guiding vision.” They also expressed dismay at how “previous attempts to develop a replacement vehicle for the aging Shuttle represent a failure of national leadership”. Those were damning statements, citing as they did a lack of leadership in space policy, a strategic interest for the United States, reaching to the highest levels of our nation for over a generation. Set forth during NASA’s darkest days, it reflected the need for proper goals, strategic goals, for our nation’s space program, lest it just slip away.

In January 2004, President Bush responded with the Vision for Space Exploration. I want to thank you, Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall, as well as former Chairman Sherry Boehlert, for bringing your leadership to bear by codifying into law these strategic goals for our nation’s civil space program with the NASA Authorization Act of 2005. A framed copy of that landmark legislation hangs on the wall outside my office. I am grateful to the Congress for providing a

strategic direction for NASA that will serve our Nation well for the next several decades.

I can also report to you today that we have made a great deal of progress in carrying out that direction. The Space Shuttle has returned to flight, we are again conducting assembly missions to the Space Station, we are meeting our international commitments, and we have begun the hard work necessary to design and develop the *Orion* Crew Exploration Vehicle and *Ares* launch vehicles to support the International Space Station and, more importantly, to carry out new missions to the moon. Working with international and commercial partners, we intend to go back to the moon this time to stay.

However, as former Science Committee Chairman Sherry Boehlert observed during one hearing: “We are, I think, seeing the dawning renaissance of NASA... but a renaissance costs money.” Indeed, Chairman Gordon, while most people are amazed by the many things NASA accomplishes, they do not realize that our budget is only 0.6% of the entire Federal budget of the United States. As one of the most internationally recognized agencies in the federal government, with enormous name recognition, many people assume NASA’s budget to be much higher than it actually is. In reality, we have to make some tough choices in the allocation of our scarce resources.

To that end, Chairman Gordon, the effect of the FY 2007 appropriation, with \$577 million less than was requested for NASA's Exploration Systems, will impose a six-month delay in fielding NASA's new human spaceflight systems, the *Orion* Crew Exploration Vehicle and *Ares I* Crew Launch Vehicle. Budget cuts are a fact of life in public service, but it is my responsibility to keep you informed of their impact upon our multi-year projects and programs. I cannot sugarcoat the issue. Due to the cumulative effect of reductions in Exploration Systems to pay for Space Shuttle Return to Flight costs in FY 2005-06, previously underestimated costs to fly the Space Shuttle until 2010, and the reduction from the FY 2007 request reflected in the FY 2007 Continuing Resolution, NASA will not be able to meet the 2014 milestone originally called for when President Bush first announced the Vision for Space Exploration based on current budget projections. My realistic assessment of our status, without being either too success-oriented or too risk averse, is that we are currently looking at a March 2015 date for the Initial Operational Capability of the *Orion* CEV, though of course we will still strive to achieve earlier schedule milestones with the funds available to us.

I am deeply concerned that the gap between the retirement of the Space Shuttle in 2010 and our new U.S. human spaceflight systems does not grow longer, and I am asking for your help on this point. Full funding of NASA's FY 2008 Exploration Systems budget request is critical to ensuring the gap between

retirement of the Space Shuttle and the new U.S. human spaceflight capability does not grow longer. As the CAIB report observed, “this approach can only be successful... if the U.S. government is... to commit the substantial resources required to implement it.”

We also have some practical considerations for managing this transition to new Exploration capabilities. As I have said in the past, the transition from the Shuttle to *Orion* and *Ares* will be NASA’s greatest management challenge. We don’t have a lot of experience with it; this kind of upheaval occurs only once in a generation, if that, and we will need the help of everyone here to do it safely and effectively. We have prepared a set of “meat and potatoes” legislative and administrative tools to help the Agency manage it, and I hope that we will be able to discuss these provisions soon with the Congress. Again, Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall, we are asking for your help.

If the United States is to continue as a recognized leader in space exploration, Earth and space science, and aeronautics research, we must continue to work together to make the right strategic choices for our Nation’s future. Our nation’s leadership in space and aeronautics is something we cannot take for granted. We cannot rest on our laurels simply because we have done great things in the past. It is something we must strive to earn every day, and we at NASA

need the help of the Congress to provide the resources and legislative tools necessary to maintain that leadership.

Human spaceflight is a strategic capability for our Nation. If the CEV is delayed even further, then our Nation will cede leadership in human spaceflight at a time when Russia and China have such capabilities, and India is developing them. Even now, NASA currently depends on the Russian Soyuz for crew rescue onboard the International Space Station. I personally find this situation to be unseemly for the United States, but that is where we are today. NASA is actively seeking commercial transport providers to the ISS to avoid even longer-term dependence on others.

That said, one of the great strengths of our Nation's space program is the international partnerships we have forged with the Space Station and our many world-class Science missions. Today, NASA has an armada of over 50 Science missions in orbit today around our Earth, the Sun, and other planets in the solar system, and our budget request supports a plan to launch ten new Science missions in 2008. Most of these missions involve partnerships with international and other U.S. government agencies.

The FY 2008 budget also increases the budget profile for Aeronautics Research over the President's FY 2007 request, and it aligns our aeronautics activities with the President's recently issued Aeronautics Research and

Development Policy. Our refocused program advances U.S. technological leadership in aeronautics. I am proud of the significant progress we have made this year in reformulating NASA's approach to aeronautics research by collaborating with the broad research community in industry, academia, and other government agencies including the FAA and DoD. We're on the right course; America leads the way in aeronautics research.

“In every generation, choices are made that lead to greatness or mediocrity.” It has been almost 35 years since man last set foot on the moon. Today, some young people cynically question whether we ever really achieved the goal of which President Kennedy so eloquently spoke. I've reached the point where I firmly believe that, if NASA were to disappear tomorrow, if the American space program were to disappear, if we never put another human into space, never put up another Hubble Space Telescope, never sent another spacecraft to another planet, most Americans would be profoundly distraught. We would feel less than ourselves, that our best days were behind us, that the future would be dimmer than the past, that we had let something important to our Nation simply slip away through a conscious decision of benign neglect.

Chairman Gordon, with your help and the help of this committee, we are making the right strategic choices for our nation's space program. I ask now for your help in carrying out the great challenges before us.

Thank you.