

**Opening Statement of
The Honorable Pete Olson
Before the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing on
Enhancing the Relevance of Space to Address National Needs
July 16, 2009**

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for calling this afternoon's hearing. I look forward to discussing how Congress and the Executive Branch can collaborate to better enhance public perception of the contributions that NASA and the civil space industry provide our nation's economy, and our quality of life. My thanks to our panel of expert witnesses for taking time out of your busy schedules to appear before this Subcommittee. Your unique perspectives are greatly valued by the members of this Committee. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

You know Madam Chairwoman, I am glad that we are holding this hearing today, but slightly discouraged that we have to hold it at all. I assure you that this hearing would not be one that would have been held on this date in 1969. Forty years ago today, Apollo 11 launched on a journey that changed mankind's perception as to what is possible. We challenged our scientists and engineers to develop never-before-used technologies to send humans on a mission that captivated the world's attention and stirred humanities collective imagination. That alone made it relevant.

I'm not sure it's possible to replicate that feeling -- that sense of achievement -- that sense of unlimited possibilities -- today without an equally challenging goal, but that does not mean that other critical discoveries and new technologies NASA is developing or is currently working on, are not equally compelling. Our landing on the moon was the beginning of a journey, not the end of one. Sometimes I feel like we have forgotten that.

Let us look at some of the issues that are critical to our nation at this time: securing our economic future, strengthening our education system, developing alternative energy sources to ease our dependence on foreign oil, improving our healthcare system and protecting our environment. All of these rate as high concerns when the American public is polled. NASA scores high ratings when it stands alone for public support, but suffers when put in a list of priorities with these other issues. This in part because many Americans aren't familiar with the wide breadth of space- and earth-related research NASA conducts, and the spinoffs that have been developed. To improve, we need to ensure that we have a worthwhile and challenging human spaceflight goal that is adequately funded, and we also have to effectively convey that America's space program provides concrete solutions to solving a wide array of societal problems.

The members of this panel are uniquely qualified to help us do that. Gen. Lyles recently chaired a study that addressed many of these subjects. His report looked closely at the overall challenges facing our civil space program. Ms. Smith and the Space Foundation, among other things, have published *The Space Report 2009*, which includes a host of invaluable information, but in my mind the data provided about the space economy is second to none. I am also thankful

that Ms. Myers and Mr. O'Brien are here to give us some insight on communicating to, and hearing from, the public. After all, it is the public who we are asking to fund many of these endeavors. When we are in this hearing room, particularly in this subcommittee, there is no need for convincing. I would love to hear how the enthusiasm that we all share in this room about space exploration can be conveyed with those out in the hall.

During this week, as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11, all of us should recognize what he have achieved, but do so with an eye on the many discoveries and achievements yet to come.

Thank you.