

Opening Statement
The Honorable Pete Olson (R-TX), Ranking Member
Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee

Hearing on *External Perspectives on the FY2010 NASA Budget Request and Related Issues*
June 18, 2009

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for calling this morning's hearing to examine NASA's FY2010 budget request, and my thanks to our panel of expert witnesses for taking time out of your busy schedules to appear before this Subcommittee. We appreciate having the benefit of your wisdom and expertise as we begin to look ahead toward reauthorizing NASA later this summer. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

NASA is an extraordinary agency whose accomplishments are known the world over, garnering instant recognition as one of America's preeminent research, development and exploration agencies.

As we sit here this morning, however, I am deeply concerned about the fate of our human space flight program, one of agency's most recognizable missions. Once the Shuttle is retired, for a period of at least five years NASA will have no independent means of flying astronauts to the Space Station, for which the U.S. has invested over \$100 billion. The follow-on Ares/Orion system, like any new human spaceflight capability, takes time and enormous resources to design, develop, test, integrate and evaluate. At the end of this fiscal year NASA will have invested \$8.3 billion in the Constellation program.

Though largely hidden from view, NASA is hard at work building ground test facilities, refining designs, testing hardware, and later this summer the agency will launch the Ares 1-X test-flight at Cape Kennedy as well as conduct a critical pad abort launch test. Enormous strides are being made.

My concern, as you may guess, stems from the Fiscal Year 2010 Commerce Justice Science spending bill that, if enacted in its present form, will delay development of Ares/Orion for up to two additional years, push total development costs up by as much as \$8 billion, and result in the reduction of more than 20 percent in the planned Constellation contractor workforce. The rationale, of course, is to await a review by the Augustine Commission.

The spending bill unwisely chooses to couple the Commission's report and options to a fiscal year that begins one month after its delivery, and to do so without giving this Committee, or the Congress, reasonable opportunity to carefully consider the options. I would be far more comfortable if we were discussing changes for Fiscal Year 2011.

Having said that, the President is fully within his rights to seek a review. My frustration simply arises from an unnecessarily compressed schedule.

I am convinced that Constellation is the right path forward. Two different Congresses – one Republican, one Democrat – overwhelmingly endorsed it. I am hopeful that when all is said and done, the Augustine Commission will be similarly persuaded.

Madam Chairwoman, I apologize for going a bit off topic. NASA has many less controversial, yet remarkable science and research programs that – thankfully – are not subject to last minute manipulation. Aeronautics R&D; planetary sciences; heliophysics; astrophysics; the breadth of NASA’s science enterprise is enormous, as are the skill and dedication of its scientists and engineers. Admittedly, they have their own challenges, but nothing as grave as those just discussed.

I want to again welcome our panel members, and I look forward to hearing your views on NASA’s implementation and management of its varied missions. Your advice will help this Committee as it begins its work on a comprehensive reauthorization bill.