

Opening Statement
Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX), Ranking Member
Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee
Hearing
Cost Management Issues in NASA's Acquisitions and Programs

March 5

Madame Chairwoman, thank you for convening this hearing today. The subject matter we are going to discuss is always of great concern, but particularly now in this current budget environment. I too want to welcome and thank our witnesses for taking the time to brief us on the GAO report assessing selected large-scale projects at NASA.

If I may for a brief moment, since this is our first subcommittee hearing of the 111th Congress, may I offer my gratitude to Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall for this opportunity to serve. I would especially like to say that I'm extremely pleased to be working with Chairwoman Gabrielle Giffords. In every conversation we have had, she has been more than gracious and welcoming of my thoughts and perspectives. As a further encouragement, it turns out our thoughts and perspectives are often the same. Our goals are similar, and our respect for the men and women of our nation's space and aeronautics agencies and industries are beyond measure.

Our nation faces enormous challenges. In their own way, the sectors we will be dealing with can help by offering ways to meet those challenges. Whether by creating jobs, performing cutting edge scientific research, or serving as the inspiration to a new generation of explorers, our work must serve as a means to help those who are doing the work on the ground (and in the air) to fulfill their missions in the most effective way possible.

And along those lines, today's hearing on cost effectiveness in particular is a very critical one. Right now, NASA has as much room for error in their budgeting as they do for one of their space missions. The agency needs to have a well balanced, well managed, and cost efficient system of budgeting and scheduling for their future missions.

I am glad to read that NASA, according to GAO, has "developed a comprehensive plan to address systemic acquisition management weaknesses" and I looking forward to learning how this was done, what challenges remain, and how this will apply to future missions. But GAO also writes that NASA "would benefit from a more disciplined approach to its acquisitions."

There are many members in this Congress, myself and the Chairwoman chief among them, who stand ready and willing to stand up for increased NASA funding. To be effective in doing so, we need to be able to show our colleagues, and frankly the American people, that their taxpayer's dollars are being invested wisely.

Thank you again for being here and I look forward to hearing your statements and to our discussion.