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Witness

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.

Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Committee Members Present

Ralph Hall, Chair (R-TX)

Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member (D-TX)

Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)

David Wu (D-OR)

Sandy Adams (R-FL)

Scott Rigell (R-VA)

Lamar Smith (R-TX)

Donna Edwards (D-MD)

Mo Brooks (R-AL)

Steven Palazzo (R-MS)

Marcia Fudge (D-OH)

Randy Hultgren (R-IL)

Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)

Terri Sewell (D-AL)

Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

Larry Buchson (R-IN)

Michael McCaul (R-TX)

Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)

Judy Biggert (R-IL)

Ben Quayle (R-AZ)

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing on the President's fiscal year (FY) 2012 Budget for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on March 2, 2011.

Chairman Ralph Hall (R-TX) opened the hearing describing his concern for the future of the space program, specifically human space flight. Citing recent problems with the termination of Constellation, Hall urged NASA to craft realistic plans and to execute them with efficiency and thrift. Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) warned that arguments over NASA's budget should result in cuts neither to critical investments in research and development (R&D), which she called a "vital resource", nor to investments in Earth science. She apologized for the lack of a solid budget by expressing her sympathy to "the challenges you are facing, Mr. Administrator, in trying to plan and carry out the challenging activities that the nation has asked you to undertake when the budgetary sands keep shifting under you."

Before commenting on the President's budget request, Administrator Charles Bolden began his testimony with a video greeting to the committee from astronauts on the International Space Station (ISS). Bolden then assured the committee that the \$18.7 billion request for FY 2012, a hold from 2010 spending levels, was enough to "invest in excellent science to win the future" and provided NASA with a "clear direction." To address Chairman Hall and other's apprehension about the future of human space flight, Bolden displayed various graphs showing how human space flight is still a substantial 57 percent of the budget. Bolden said safety remains his "number one priority," but he spent time discussing the heightened importance of the ISS as an exceptional research center and "anchor for future exploration."

Most of the question and answer session was dominated by discussion of the future commercial space flight program, in which NASA would transfer lower orbit operations over to private companies such as Boeing and Orbital. Bolden explained that the most

efficient and fastest way to get his astronauts into lower orbit safely was with established private contractors, allowing NASA to focus on deeper space exploration. NASA's long term goals and schedule were investigated by the committee. Bolden avoided giving concrete launch dates for most projects, including Earth science related missions CLARREO and DESDynI, citing uncertainty in the budget battle for 2011. Congressman Lamar Smith (R-TX) dove into this topic by asking Bolden whether NASA could in fact complete its goals, like enabling a heavy lift module in 2016, with the current budget. "Very difficult," responded Bolden, "but not impossible."

Representative Donna Edwards (D-MD) sought to understand the lack of consistency in Earth science funding between the authorization and budget request (about \$150 million in cuts). Bolden called these cuts "very difficult" but elaborated on the importance of Earth science telling the committee, "we need the tools to see natural hazards...the atmosphere, oceans, [and] topography." Edwards supported Bolden's comments by requesting a focused look at the Earth science program to make sure there are no gaps. Administrator Bolden cautioned the committee not to inject politics in their consideration of NASA's Earth science funding by warning against "dumb things like taking away satellites because of global warming."

"I don't do global warming," Bolden said, "I do Earth science."

"I don't do global warming, either," Chairman Hall deadpanned.

Other discussion areas included STEM education, NextGen and aeronautics issues, the benefit of NASA technologies to the manufacturing sector, and the future of various NASA facilities and centers in members' districts.

Testimony from the chair and witness, as well as an archived webcast, can be found at the committee web page.