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Examining the President's fiscal year 2016 budget request for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Witness (*with link to opening statement*)

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden

Administrator of NASA

Members

Ted Cruz (R-TX), Subcommittee Chairman

Gary Peters (D-MI), Subcommittee Ranking Member

Bill Nelson (D-FL), Committee Ranking Member

Cory Gardner (R-CO)

Roy Blunt (R-MO)

On March 12, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Science, Space, and Competitiveness held a hearing to review the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for NASA. The Honorable Charles Bolden, Administrator of NASA, answered senators' questions about the balance of funding in the proposed budget and the current and future focus of NASA and its missions.

Senator Cruz argued that NASA's core mission and purpose is exploring the universe, and emphasized a perceived need for NASA to get back to hard science and exploration. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) echoed Sen. Cruz's sentiment, pointing out that NASA is the only agency sending rovers to Mars and Americans to outer space, while other agencies also work on Earth sciences. Sen. Cruz encouraged Bolden to consider the cultural importance of NASA and space exploration in inspiring the next generation of STEM-focused students. Bolden met the senator's comments with reminders that NASA's missions are synergistic, and data acquired through planetary science missions is necessary to plan timing of manned space launches, among other considerations. He also stated that while the Department of the Interior runs Landsat and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) runs the Joint Polar Satellite System, these satellites are able to provide vital weather data because NASA developed the instrumentation and launched them into space.

Subcommittee Ranking Member Gary Peters (D-MI) and Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) both spoke about the importance of maintaining balance in NASA's budget. Senator Peters highlighted the importance of funding the Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate to ensure that America maintains its position as an innovative and competitive nation in the aviation industry. Sen. Nelson stated his support for increasing funding for both Earth science and space exploration, referencing the Apollo mission, a time when NASA comprised 4 percent of the U.S. federal budget, of which it is now less than 1 percent. Nelson also explained the vital importance of weather satellites to his home state in the face of threats from severe weather, such as hurricanes.

Bolden stated that under the FY 2016 proposal, NASA would still be on track to extend the International Space Station (ISS) until 2024 and replace U.S. reliance on the Russian Soyuz capsules with transportation to the ISS via SpaceX and Boeing spacecraft by 2017, which will cost the U.S. \$2.1 billion.

An archived link to the video is available [here](#).
