

OPENING STATEMENT

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Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

Hearing: “NASA’s Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Proposal”

February 16, 2006

Good morning. I’d like to join my colleagues in welcoming Administrator Griffin and Deputy Administrator Dale. I enjoyed our recent conversation, and I look forward to more opportunities to exchange views.

Given the interest of all of us in hearing from the Administrator, I’ll be brief in my opening remarks. I would simply say that I believe the FY 2007 NASA budget request represents a good-faith effort by Dr. Griffin to construct a viable set of programs within the constraints he has been given. That’s the good news.

The “not-so-good” news is that this budget request contains cuts and cancellations that will do real damage both in the near term and for years to come.

Let me mention just a few items.

You may be aware of my interest in NASA’s aeronautics programs and my belief that NASA’s aeronautics R&D activities are vitally important both to our quality of life and our competitiveness. Yet this budget request ignores the direction of last year’s appropriations and authorization legislation and continues to put NASA’s aeronautics program on a downward funding spiral.

It makes a virtue of a shrinking budget by stressing its commitment to “fundamental aeronautics research” at the expense of any meaningful NASA role in supporting more advanced R&D.

Just one example of what is going on in this budget request:

Although NASA has pledged to support the Joint Planning and Development Office (JPDO) in developing the next generation air traffic management system, this budget request would cut the funding for air traffic management R&D from \$146.4 million in FY 2006 to \$71.7 million in FY 2011 - that is, it would cut the funding in half! That makes little sense to me.

The situation facing the space and Earth sciences is equally troubling. More than a billion dollars was removed last year from the budgetary runout for space and Earth science that had been in the FY 2005 NASA outyear budget plan. An additional \$3.1 billion is removed from the runout in this year’s budget request.

So just two years after OSTP director Marburger lauded the “robust” science program that would be undertaken if the exploration initiative were approved, we have seen more than \$4 billion taken out of NASA’s space and Earth science accounts.

One of the most inexplicable aspects of those cuts is NASA’s plan to cut between \$350 to \$400 million from research and analysis funding over the next five years. As you may know, that is the funding that helps develop the next generation of scientists and engineers at our nation’s universities.

I am puzzled that the same Administration that announced its American Competitiveness Initiative with such fanfare would turn around and cut research funding important to our universities' educational and research missions. And of course, the FY 2007 budget request would continue the dismantling of NASA's life and microgravity research programs.

Coupled with the cuts to NASA's long-term technology programs, the effective elimination of NASA's life and microgravity science programs is a troubling indicator of an agency being forced to "eat its seed corn" to address near-term funding issues - and in the process, weaken NASA's ability to achieve the nation's long-term exploration objectives.

In that regard, I would like to ask unanimous consent that [a statement by the Exploration Life and Medical Sciences Coalition](#) be entered into the record of this hearing.

In closing, I want to reiterate that we - Congress and the White House - need to take the time to "get it right", whether we are talking about NASA's human space flight, science, or aeronautics programs.

And we need to be willing to pay it takes to "get it right" - or not do it at all. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.