

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

***The Space Leadership Preservation Act and the Need for Stability at NASA***

February 25, 2016  
10 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

**Purpose**

At 10:00 a.m. on February 25, 2016, the Committee will hold a hearing titled “*The Space Leadership Preservation Act and the Need for Stability at NASA*” to receive testimony on legislation (H.R. 2093) first introduced in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and re-introduced in the 113<sup>th</sup> and the 114<sup>th</sup> Congresses. This hearing will inform the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee’s consideration of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) policies, organization, and programs.

**Witnesses**

**Panel 1**

- **The Honorable John Culberson (TX-7)**

**Panel 2**

- **Dr. Michael Griffin**, Former Administrator, NASA
- **Colonel Eileen Collins**, USAF (Ret.); Commander, STS-93 and 114; and Pilot, STS-63 and 94; and former Chair, Subcommittee on Space Operations, NASA Advisory Council
- **Ms. Cristina Chaplain**, Director, Acquisitions and Sourcing Management, Government Accountability Office (GAO)

**Background:**

On February 27, 2013, the Committee held a hearing titled “A Review of the Space Leadership Preservation Act.” The bill’s cosponsors, Reps. Frank Wolf and John Culberson testified along with Mr. Tom Young, who testified on his own behalf, and Mr. Elliott Pulham, Chief Executive Officer of the Space Foundation.

Prior to this hearing, the Space Foundation issued a report in December 2012 titled *Pioneering: Sustaining U.S. Leadership in Space*. The report noted that,

“...[a]s the space program has evolved, we have witnessed frequent redirection and constantly shifting priorities at NASA, mixed signals from Congress and the

administration, organizational conflicts, and the lack of a singular purpose, resulting in a space agency without a clear, stable direction.”<sup>1</sup>

The report went on to find that,

“...NASA needs to embrace a singular, unambiguous purpose that leverages its core strengths and provides a clear direction for prioritizing tasks and assigning resources.”<sup>2</sup>

A more recent report from the National Research Council titled *Pathways to Exploration: Rationales and Approaches for a U.S. Program of Human Space Exploration* (June 2014), stated:

“...the human spaceflight program in the United States had experienced considerable programmatic turbulence, with frequent and dramatic changes in program goals and mission plans in response to changes in national policies. The changes had a high cost in program resources and opportunities and imposed what many feared was an intolerable burden on already constrained human exploration budgets.”<sup>3</sup>

On October 28, 2015, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden gave a speech before the Center for American Progress and stated that NASA needs a “constancy of purpose” that stretches across multiple administrations. The Administrator stated,

“...[w]e’ve got to stay focused. If we change our minds at any time in the next three or four years, which always is a risk when you go through a government transition, my belief is that we’re doomed.”<sup>4</sup>

The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP), established by Congress to report to NASA and Congress on safety issues affecting NASA, stated in their recent report last January,

“NASA faces another challenge that has historically led to disruption and inefficiency and arguably has impact on safety and good systems engineering. This is the challenge of starting over with new programs and directions following Administration change. As in prior reports, the ASAP urges constancy of purpose. Failing to stay the course with current programs of record will make it an even longer, costlier, and potentially less safe trip to Mars.”<sup>5</sup>

As the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee continues to advocate for the need to legislatively reauthorize NASA, this hearing will take a comprehensive look at how the agency functions, and consider legislative proposals, such as *The Space Leadership Preservation Act* (H.R. 2093), to improve NASA’s management structure and accountability.

The *Space Leadership Preservation Act* proposes a number of changes to the management structure of NASA and its procurement authority to address the issue of constancy of purpose.

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://www.spacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/downloads/PIONEERING\\_report.pdf](http://www.spacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/downloads/PIONEERING_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/18801/pathways-to-exploration-rationales-and-approaches-for-a-us-program>

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <http://spacenews.com/bolden-nasa-doomed-if-next-president-dumps-journey-to-mars/>

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [http://oir.hq.nasa.gov/asap/documents/2015\\_ASAP\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://oir.hq.nasa.gov/asap/documents/2015_ASAP_Annual_Report.pdf)

The bill includes the following provisions:

**10 Year Term for the NASA Administrator:** The bill establishes a 10-year term for the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The Administrator shall be chosen from a list provided by a new “Board of Directors”.

**Establish a Board of Directors:** The bill establishes a “Board of Directors.” It provides the manner of the selection and appointment as well as the criteria to qualify for the board and the length of each member’s term. This section empowers the board to provide to the President and Congress a proposed budget for NASA; to provide a list of nominees to the President for appointment to Administrator, Deputy Administrator, and Chief Financial Officer, all Senate confirmed appointments; to provide reports on specific policy matters deemed important by Congress; to review current space programs and future space exploration plans; and to provide a recommendation to Congress and President for the removal of the Administrator for cause.

**Budget Deliberation Review:** The bill directs NASA to provide the “Board of Directors” with the budget they send to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), thereby allowing them to see any differences between what NASA asked for in a budget and what the Administration formally requested for NASA. The bill also requires the President to provide an explanation of any discrepancy in the budget proposal provided by the “Board of Directors.”

**Long-Term Procurement:** The bill provides NASA with the capability to enter into contracts for rocket propulsion systems and manned and unmanned space transportation vehicles and payloads, including expendable launch vehicles, and any other infrastructure intended for placement or operation in space or on celestial bodies, and services related thereto for periods in excess of the period for which funds are otherwise available for obligation under certain conditions.

### **Issues**

- What are the key challenges facing NASA today?
- What organizational changes might be made to ensure more stability for our nation’s civil space program?
- Should NASA’s management structure be modeled after other agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, to provide more consistency in goals and constancy of purpose?