

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Media Contacts: Zachary Kurz
(202) 225-6371

**Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.)
Hearing on An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration budget
for Fiscal year 2015**

Chairman Palazzo: I recognize myself for five minutes for an opening statement.

Mr. Administrator, I will begin my statement this morning with a sincere thank you for your leadership and the hard work of all the men and women at NASA. While I do not always agree with the Administration's decisions, I appreciate the good people at NASA and their service to the country.

The President's budget request this year for NASA is \$17.4 billion, a decrease of \$185.9 million relative to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which was signed by the president only two months ago. I am most concerned by the Administration's insistence on reordering the funding priorities of the agency. The Consolidated Appropriations Act provided clear priorities to the Administration; in fact, Administrator Bolden heaped praise on the appropriation for NASA the day it passed. And yet we see again that the President has chosen to realign those priorities he agreed to in both the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 and the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Again this year, the Administration is proposing funding for the Asteroid Redirect Mission or ARM. There is still no budget profile, program office, or schedule for this mission, so we are in the same position we were a year ago when it was first announced.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act directed NASA to produce more information on this mission before further investments will be considered. I hope to hear from the Administrator today that these plans are under development, and that the agency is also taking ongoing concerns - from many in the scientific community and its own advisory groups - into consideration.

At the same time the Administration has requested these additional funds for the ARM, cuts have been made to top Agency and Congressional priorities. For the fourth year in a row, the Administration has requested a reduction to the Orion crew capsule and the Space Launch System. This year's budget request cuts these programs by \$330 million. As Administrator Bolden stated the day the Appropriations bill passed, "The bill keeps NASA's deep space exploration program (the Space Launch System and Orion) on track." Surely if \$1.6 billion would only keep the SLS and Orion on track, a \$219 million cut could derail those efforts.

This is simply unacceptable. These critical assets are the essential components of our future deep space human exploration efforts. The Administration cannot in the same breath claim to support space exploration while continuing to divert agency budgets in a manner that undermines that mission. The agency must be mission-focused and budget vigilant, and that is why I will continue to work for appropriate funding levels for these systems.

Just as in years past, the Administration is requesting large increases in the Commercial Crew Program without any data to back up the request. One of my top priorities as Chairman of this Subcommittee, especially in times of international uncertainty, is ensuring we restore the capability to launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil as soon as possible. Our commercial partners are the key to making that possible as they relieve us from relying on the Russians for access to the International Space Station.

But, in times of budget constraint, we must be sure we are doing the best we can with what we have. This proposal should be accompanied by a strategic acquisition plan and other planning documents in order to justify the Administration's budget request increase of \$152.3 million.

Additionally, this year's budget request also includes the cancellation of the SOFIA program. American taxpayers invested \$1.2 billion on this one of a kind asset, and the Administration is proposing cancellation just as it gets off the ground. Administrator Bolden, he said you might be more helpful in answering questions we have about the proposed cancellation of SOFIA.

I would hate to see us cancel yet another international partnership, in the same manner as we did with the ExoMars project. I am moved to ask, how can the international community rely on this Administration to collaborate on anything without fear of cancellation?

There is no doubt that our nation's space program is facing many challenges. That is all the more reason the Administration must deliver budgets and goals that support a serious commitment to human exploration, and stop using the Science Mission Directorate as a partisan football. The scientists and engineers who work every day to maintain U.S. leadership in space are counting on you, Administrator Bolden.

The American public is counting on the President. They are counting on each of us here in this room to have honest conversation about where we are at this time in our nation's space program, and to make tough choices. It means setting politics aside and investing strategically in our future. I am ready to work together to ensure the priorities from previous legislation – that the President signed - will be honored. The future of our space program depends on it.

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