

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



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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
Hearing on “An Overview of the National Science Foundation Budget for Fiscal Year 2014”**

Chairman Smith: America is a nation of explorers, and space is the next frontier. Just last week, NASA announced the discovery of new worlds beyond our solar system that resemble our own planet. We in Congress need to be diligent in our review of the Administration’s proposed budget for NASA to ensure that this agency remains focused on its primary mission—space exploration.

In April 2010—almost 3 years ago—President Obama addressed the NASA workforce at the Kennedy Space Center. He stated that the next mission for American astronauts beyond the International Space Station was an asteroid, and canceled NASA’s many years of work to return to the surface of the Moon.

Last December, a National Academy of Sciences review of NASA’s strategic direction made the following observation:

“The committee has seen little evidence that a current stated goal for NASA’s human spaceflight program—namely, to visit an asteroid by 2025—has been widely accepted as a compelling destination by NASA’s own workforce, by the nation as a whole, or by the international community. On the international front there appears to be continued enthusiasm for a mission to the Moon but not for an asteroid mission.”

Not having found a suitable asteroid for NASA astronauts, the President’s budget now proposes a robotic asteroid retrieval mission to bring one closer to the Moon. NASA’s budget does not identify where the funding for such an asteroid retrieval mission will come from. But it is likely to detract from NASA’s human spaceflight projects, the International Space Station, Orion Crew Vehicle and Space Launch System.

Further, the President’s budget requests over \$1.8 billion for NASA’s Earth Science programs. How does this high level of spending affect other NASA priorities, especially planetary exploration? Here are the priorities for NASA’s exploration missions that have been consistent in Congressional authorizations for the past eight years:

- We need to make the International Space Station both an international and scientific success that will enable further exploration beyond Earth orbit.
- We need to build new systems to once again launch American astronauts on American rockets as soon as possible. Today, the U.S. pays Russia \$63 million to take each of our astronauts to the Station.

- While we support certain investments by NASA to fund private sector cargo and crew initiatives to support the Station, Congress has been clear over the years that the Orion Crew Vehicle serve as a backup option.
- And finally, after receiving testimony from many engineers and astronauts, Congress has been insistent that in order to venture beyond Low-Earth orbit, a heavy-lift launch vehicle—NASA’s Space Launch System—needs to be developed.

By contrast, I am disheartened by the Administration’s ever-changing goals and their lack of justifications and details.

The goal of NASA’s human spaceflight program is to go to Mars and beyond on a path that includes returning to the moon or asteroids as necessary. This stepping-stone approach for our exploration out of low-earth orbit is clear and unambiguous.

While federal budgets will continue to be uncertain, Congressional support for NASA’s exploration mission is clear and unwavering.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back the remainder of my time.

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