

**Opening Statement of
The Honorable Ralph Hall, Ranking Republican Member
Committee on Science and Technology
Hearing on Review of the Proposed National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Human Spaceflight Plan
May 26, 2010**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing today on the important topic of NASA's human space flight program.

I also want to thank you for assembling such an extraordinary panel of witnesses today. I want to welcome NASA Administrator Bolden, and I hope that he can answer some of the many questions that we have about the President's proposal.

I am also pleased to see two space heroes with us today, Neil Armstrong and Gene Cernan. Both men are legendary astronauts and explorers who laid the foundation for our nation's space exploration beyond low Earth orbit. I am honored that they have agreed to share their knowledge, their commitment, and their passion with us today. I also want to thank Tom Young for once again agreeing to testify before this committee and share his knowledge and years of experience working with the government acquisition process.

It has now been nearly four months since the administration proposed radical changes to NASA's human space flight and exploration programs. From the very beginning it was clear that NASA's proposal lacked the sufficient detail that Congress would need to determine whether it was a credible plan. Yet, in spite of our best efforts to obtain more information from NASA this situation has not improved. Indeed, the President's trip to the Kennedy Space Center on April 15th only added to the confusion as he laid out more aspirational goals, but provided no clear idea of how they fit together or how he expects to pay for these new ventures.

As such, I still have many basic concerns about our ability to access and use the International Space Station after the Shuttle is retired. I remain concerned about the "gap" in U.S. access to space, and I want to ensure that we can effectively use the enormous research capabilities of the International Space Station. In examining the President's plan, I still do not see a viable way to minimize the "gap" and provide for exciting research on the ISS.

The President's most recent decision to send an unmanned "lifeboat" to the Space Station at a potential cost of \$5-7 billion does nothing to solve this problem and largely duplicates existing services provided by the Russians. Although we have already spent nearly \$10 billion on the Constellation system that has achieved significant milestones and is well on its way to providing continued U.S. access to space, the Administration's decision to cancel Constellation has further stalled development and jeopardized our undisputed leadership in space.

As I have said many times before, I am concerned with the proposed commercial crew direction of this Administration. While I have long supported the development of commercial *cargo* operations, I believe that it is prudent that we first test cargo capabilities before risking the lives

of our astronauts on newly developed systems. I also have not seen credible data to suggest that there is a viable market for commercial crew carriers, and in the absence of that data I fear that we might be setting ourselves up for failure if, or when, the markets do not materialize. Anyone can claim to be able to take over commercial crew, and I have read the good ideas of another space hero, Buzz Aldrin who supports commercial crew, but I am still looking for concrete data that they can finish what they start, and will not be coming back to the government for additional money if they take over.

Finally, in examining options beyond low Earth orbit, I am unclear when we might see the development of a heavy lift system, or whether NASA still considers the Moon as a logical destination. We have been told that a new “game-changing” technology development program will provide capabilities for accessing the far reaches of space, but we have very few specifics on mission, goals, and direction. I hope Administrator Bolden has some of the answers that have been lacking up to now.

In the absence of a defensible, credible plan, I and many of our members continue to support the Constellation program as currently authorized and appropriated by successive Congresses. GAO will continue investigating whether NASA is improperly withholding funds, and improperly applying the Anti-Deficiency Act as a means of slowing Constellation work. I believe that Congress has been clear that it supports the unhindered continuation of Constellation until it authorizes an alternative program.

Mr. Chairman I look forward to working with you over the next several weeks as the Committee begins to reauthorize NASA, and we can no longer wait for NASA to provide justifications for its radical changes. Time is running out.

I look forward to today’s testimony, and I yield back my time.