

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Donna F. Edwards
Subcommittee on Space
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

“MARKUP OF 2013 NASA AUTHORIZATION”

July 10, 2013

Mr. Chairman, NASA is critical to this Nation and its economic strength. Unfortunately, in the past few years, we have not funded NASA adequately in a way that reflects that unique role. Notwithstanding the fact that the version of the bill we are marking up today incorporates some positive clarifications from the version initially circulated for discussion two weeks ago, the current version of the bill still cuts NASA’s funding in Fiscal Year 2014 by almost a billion dollars from the President’s request.

This is simply unacceptable.

Not only does the Committee leadership’s bill not contain funding commensurate with the tasks NASA is being asked to undertake, it gives NASA additional unfunded mandates, such as requiring NASA to establish a program to develop a sustained human presence on both the Moon and Mars while maintaining deep sequestration cuts over the life of the bill.

In addition, while the Committee Print version of the Majority’s bill authorizes increases for the Space Launch System—SLS account—over what was in the earlier discussion draft, the top-line for the agency has not changed.

I’m still trying to make sense of that change, especially when all of the the exploration ground systems funding authorized in the previous version of the bill appears to have gone away.

The Majority has either just jiggered the books without actually adding any new money to the SLS vehicle program, or they are telling the folks at Kennedy Space Center that they can forget about funding the exploration ground systems. I hope the Chairman can clarify which it is.

I’m also concerned about the bill’s cuts to the account that funds management and operations at our NASA field centers, including Goddard near my District, Stennis, Kennedy Space Center, Marshall Space Flight Center, and Johnson Space Center, among many others. That account also funds NASA’s IT security measures and independent technical authority, an essential aspect of ensuring safety and mission assurance in NASA projects. It’s an account that has already been cut too much in recent years, and this bill would do further damage.

Further, reductions to Environment Compliance and Restoration may also have negative impacts on the investigation and clean-up of ground water and soil contamination at the Kennedy Space Center, which is being conducted to comply with State of Florida mandates.

I believe there is a way to ensure funding for these programs at NASA Centers all over the country.

I could go on, Mr. Chairman, but I think you get a sense of my concerns about this bill.

While I think we all share the goal of a strong and vibrant civil space program, I just can't see how we can get there from here with this bill.

And while some may say that authorizing funding at levels above sequestration may run contrary to the Budget Control Act, I have yet to find anything in that Act that stipulates the funding Committees can authorize. That argument is simply a red herring.

Funding NASA, our nation's crown jewel, at sequestration levels is a choice not a legal requirement, and it's not a choice I can support.

That is why I am submitting an amendment at this markup which I hope will be the foundation for continued bipartisan support and that will ensure a 21st century space innovation agenda.