

**Opening Statement of  
Congressman Tom Feeney (R-FL), Ranking Republican Member  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics  
Committee on Science and Technology  
February 13, 2008**

***Full Committee Hearing: NASA's Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request***

Thank you Mr. Chairman for holding today's hearing. I want to again welcome NASA Administrator Michael Griffin to our committee. We are fortunate for your leadership. We are also fortunate for the retirement of the term "spiral development" from NASA's lexicon.

With the passage of time, we run the risk of reverting back to pre-Columbia behavior. As the Columbia Accident Investigation Board observed:

*NASA has usually failed to receive budgetary support consistent with its ambitions. The result...is an organization straining to do too much with too little.*

Both the legislative and executive branches are susceptible of lapsing into this behavior.

On Capitol Hill, we are often eager to assign new missions to NASA. This compliment stems from NASA's ability to perform the most difficult of assignments. Last November's solar array repair conducted by Astronaut Scott Parazynski provides a recent example of such seemingly effortless success in the face of an unexpected and daunting challenge.

But in the FY07 Omnibus/Continuing Resolution, Congress appropriated to NASA \$545 million less than the President's request with that reduction -- and then some -- coming from NASA's current and future human spaceflight programs. In the recently passed FY08 Omnibus, Congress further reduced the agency's funding request through a \$192.5 million rescission.

Today, the Administration's FY09 budget request of \$17.6 billion is 1.8% percent above last year's request. After factoring in inflation, NASA's resources are shrinking in real terms while the agency is charged with maintaining America's preeminence as a spacefaring nation.

Maintaining such preeminence includes developing a new generation of human spaceflight vehicles to replace the Space Shuttle. As the Columbia Accident Investigation Board correctly noted:

*It is the view of the Board that the previous attempts to develop a replacement vehicle for the aging shuttle represented a failure of national leadership*

The Board went on to state:

*Continued U.S. leadership in space is an important national objective. That leadership depends on a willingness to pay the costs of achieving it.*

Administrator Griffin, I know you understand this truth. The outstanding question is whether anyone else is listening.

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