

**OPENING STATEMENT**  
**THE HONORABLE RALPH HALL (R-TX)**  
**Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology**  
*NASA's Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request*  
Tuesday, May 19, 2009  
2318 Rayburn Office Building

Mr. Chairman I want to thank you for holding this hearing on NASA's fiscal year 2010 budget request. 2010 is a pivotal year for our space program, and this is an important opportunity to hear from NASA and seek answers to a wide-range of questions.

I would also like to welcome our witness, Acting NASA Administrator Chris Scolese who has been doing a difficult job under challenging circumstances. Thank you for your dedication and commitment.

NASA gives our country so much to be proud of. Right now, 350 miles up, Shuttle astronauts are wrapping up an extraordinary mission. They salvaged a multi-billion dollar Space Science mission by repairing the Hubble space telescope during a series of complicated and dangerous spacewalks. This mission showcases the unique capabilities of the space shuttle which will be lost after it is retired. This is a very daring mission, and the men and women we send into space put their lives on the line. They deserve our support, and they deserve the best equipment and training we can provide.

NASA is one area of the federal budget where I think some increases are justified. While we do not need to add more money to the ballooning deficit, we should prioritize Federal spending on programs that yield great returns—and NASA is one of those programs. I am encouraged that NASA's FY2010 budget request of \$18.7 billion is about 5 percent above last year's appropriation, but as I said to Dr. Holdren last week, I am very concerned that priorities may be shifting away from human space exploration at a very critical time. The Administration has called for an independent review of Human Space Flight to be chaired by Norm Augustine that is expected to make recommendations later this summer. There are many questions that should be answered including about whether to extend the International Space Station beyond 2016. The ISS is a valuable National Laboratory and we should be seeking new and innovative research to perform there well into the future.

NASA is still on a path to complete the remaining Shuttle missions, including an additional flight to deliver the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) to the ISS, and then retire the Shuttle without having developed a new capability to get independently to and from the ISS. In the resulting gap we stand to lose a highly skilled workforce and a number of accompanying parts suppliers and other contractors that we cannot afford to lose – as we did between Apollo and Shuttle.

Mr. Chairman, I am also very concerned that this budget has deleted nearly all the out-year funding for the Lunar Lander and for the heavy-lift Constellation

launch vehicle that is necessary to get us out of low Earth orbit. The Exploration program needs stability and growth and cannot be the bill-payer for the rest of the agency.

Moreover, NASA's science and aeronautics programs, like the agency's top line, show little growth, with the exception of Earth Science and Heliophysics. Just like human spaceflight, these important research programs are financially stressed, experiencing cost growth that far exceed increases in their respective budget lines. We are at risk of launching fewer and fewer research missions, and I am concerned we will lose the research infrastructure that has been so important to NASA, but is also a source of important new technologies for American commerce, especially for our satellite and aerospace industries. American companies have, until recently, led the world in the production of leading-edge technologies in aviation, communications, surveillance, and navigation services. I worry that under-investing in these disciplines will – in 10 to 15 years time – really come back to haunt us.

Mr. Chairman, we have a lot of issues to discuss today. I look forward to a productive hearing.