

House Committee on Science and Technology
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight

Hearing on
The independent Audit of the
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

December 3, 2009

Opening Statement of the Honorable Paul Broun, M.D. (R-GA)
Ranking Member

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Let me welcome our witnesses here today, and congratulate two of them on their new appointments. Mr. Martin and Dr. Robinson both have their work cut out for them, and I look forward to working with both of them in the future. I'd be remiss if I did not mention the tremendous progress their predecessors made. NASA's financial management was in disarray for many years. The agency is still not out of the woods, but the steps taken by their predecessors should be noted. I hope that our witnesses today will continue this trend, and I look forward to following their progress.

Problems still remain, however. As Mr. Murrin will detail in his testimony, NASA once again received a disclaimed opinion – meaning that the independent auditor could not express an opinion on the status of NASA's balance sheets. This is certainly not the first time this has happened. Our Committee, GAO, and NASA IG have all followed this issue closely for many years. GAO and the NASA IG have issued a litany of reports over the last two decades and this Committee has held several hearings to address the topic.

I'm pleased to hear that NASA seems to have "bought in" to a single standardized accounting system, rather than the multiple fiefdoms of the past. NASA still faces the daunting task of valuing Property Plant & Equipment (PP&E) – most notable the Space Shuttle and the International Space Station (ISS). While this problem may never be fixed, it may work itself out over time as the Shuttle is planned to retire next year, and ISS operations are planned to end in 2014. Until then, I hope that solutions can be found that both respect appropriate accounting standards, as well as real world realities.

I look forward to monitoring your progress and ensuring that NASA handles scarce taxpayer resources in a transparent and accountable manner.

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

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