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House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Thursday, April 2, 2009

Verbal Testimony as Prepared for Delivery

Good afternoon Chairman Mollohan, Ranking Member Wolf and other distinguished members of the committee. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to testify during this important hearing on the House appropriations package for NASA and other space-related agencies. Mr. Chairman, I want to take this opportunity to thank you personally for all the work you have done to support NASA. I know in the last year alone you were responsible for securing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional NASA funding, and the space community is extremely grateful for that.

I am representing the Aerospace Industries Association and our almost 300 member companies, which contribute more than \$200 billion to the U.S. economy and are responsible for more than 2 million jobs. We build the satellites, rockets, manned vehicles and other hardware that allows the U.S. to stay at the forefront of space exploration.

However, our leadership in space is no longer assured. Today more than 60 countries have active space programs, some of which, as we know, are extremely ambitious.

This is why the task before you is so important. Funding for NASA and the other agencies involved in space provides the backbone for the U.S. response to these international challenges.

NASA funding is going in the right direction. As we know, the stimulus package included significant amounts of money for space exploration, science missions and replacing aging NOAA satellites. The president's proposed NASA budget also set a solid top-line funding level as well, including more money for aeronautics R&D after years of neglect. Of particular importance is NASA's Environmentally Responsible Aviation initiative, which promises to greatly advance the industry's priority of reducing aviation's environmental impacts.

But we have concerns about what happens with the NASA budget in the coming years. Budget projections show the funding level flattening out starting in 2011 through 2013.

This is during the projected 5-year gap in U.S. manned space access, during which we will have to rely on Russia – to say the least, a less-than-ideal situation. NASA will need as many resources as possible to speed the introduction of the next generation of space vehicles to reduce that gap. NOAA also needs more resources to replace satellites that are in danger of failing, which would leave us with holes in climate information. Dropping the funding ball for these agencies during this critical time is not an effective strategy to keep U.S. space leadership.

Another piece to that puzzle is inspiring young people to get into the STEM education track. The space community is concerned that there are not enough students studying technical disciplines to replace the large wave of aging workers who are – or will soon be – eligible to

retire. As you know, STEM-related projects are peppered throughout the budget, and we would ask that you give them your support.

We know federal budget dollars are extremely scarce these days. But space programs provide some of the best return on investment in the federal government.

The space industry contributes more than \$33 billion to the U.S. economy each year and provides tens of thousands of high-paying jobs. Congress has already expressed its faith in space as an economic engine by including it in the stimulus bill. The program is also an incubator for technological innovation that has paid huge dividends over the years, as space applications migrate to health, energy and other fields. Other benefits are not specifically financial, but no less important – monitoring and understanding our Earth, exploring the moon and planets, discovering more about our place in the universe.

I'd like to close today by mentioning AIA's most visible contribution to STEM education – the Team America Rocketry Challenge. It is the world's largest rocket contest and involves about 7,000 middle and high school students each year, giving them aerospace experience as they design, hand-build and launch their rockets. The final fly-off for the 100 best-qualifying teams is set for May 16 right in Congressman Wolf's district – Great Meadow in The Plains, Virginia. All of you are invited to take part in this great event.

Thank you again, and I'm happy to take any questions.

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