

Confirmation of Charles Bolden and Lori Garver to be Administrator and  
Deputy Administrator of NASA  
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee  
July 8, 2009

Chair: [Senator Jay Rockefeller](#) (D-WV)

Ranking Member: [Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison](#) (R-TX)

Witnesses

Maj. Gen. Charles Bolden (USMC, Ret.), nominee for Administrator ([prepared statement](#))

Ms. Lori Garver, nominee for Deputy Administrator ([prepared statement](#))

Background

NASA has had an Acting Administrator, Christopher Scolese, since the resignation of Michael Griffin on January 20, 2009 with the change in administrations. The Deputy Administrator position has been vacant since January also, when Shana Dale resigned. Gen. Bolden and Ms. Garver were nominated by President Obama to be Administrator and Deputy Administrator on May 23, 2009. Gen. Bolden is a former NASA astronaut who flew on a space shuttle mission with now-Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) who was a congressman from Florida at the time. Ms. Garver has a broad background in space – from representing grass roots space enthusiasts as executive director of the National Space Society, to serving at NASA at Associate Administrator for Policy during the tenure of Administrator Dan Goldin, to representing private sector space efforts as a consultant for the past eight years. She competed with singer Lance Bass to become a “space tourist” on a Russian Soyuz spacecraft in the early 2000’s, but neither was able to raise the requisite funding. She was a key adviser to the Hillary Clinton campaign on space issues, and moved to the Obama campaign after he won the Democratic nomination. A webcast of the hearing is available [here](#).

Nuggets

“I view NASA as adrift. A splendid story of the past. ... What are you going to do about it?” Senator Jay Rockefeller

“Franklin Chang Diaz is my idol. He is designing a rocket ... that will take us to Mars in 39 days.” Charlie Bolden

“The ISS is a toehold to the universe.” Lori Garver

## Hearing Highlights

Charlie Bolden and Lori Garver sailed through their confirmation hearing this afternoon. The hearing was somewhat delayed by Senate business and a committee markup, but when the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee was finally able to turn its attention to nominations, Gen. Bolden and Ms. Garver were first up. Other time pressures shortened the question and answer period, but committee chair Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) posed what is probably the most fundamental question facing the agency. He told the nominees that he felt that NASA was drifting and did not have the compelling sense of purpose that it did in the past. He asked the duo if they agreed, and if so, what did they intend to do about it.

Gen. Bolden called for a reinvigoration of research and development (R&D) at NASA that could inspire young people to come and work at the agency. He later added that the government could not fund everything that people want NASA to accomplish, and championed the role that commercial space, especially entrepreneurs, need to play. Ms. Garver said that she shared the Senator's concern, and advocated an enhanced effort by NASA to better communicate with the public about the space program's relevance to the challenges facing the country. In that respect, her answer echoed the theme of the National Research Council report released the day before the hearing -- [America's Future in Space: Aligning the Civil Space Program with National Needs.](#)

Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) argued that only the President could "unleash the ingenuity of these engineers" and restore the "magic" of NASA's past. He said that if the President embraced a bold mission for NASA, Gen. Bolden and Ms. Garver were the team that could implement it. He stressed that the President needs to lead and "not let the Office of Management and Budget run NASA." He asserted that that was the case not only in the Bush Administration, but the Clinton Administration as well, so that it is a bipartisan issue.

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) asked about the future of the International Space Station (ISS) as a national laboratory. Both nominees noted that the ISS has had its full complement of six crew members for only a few weeks so the ISS' potential was just about to be tapped. Gen. Bolden said ISS would "pave the way" to Mars and Ms. Garver called it a "toehold to the universe." Both also cited the need for space transportation systems that could get to ISS more economically and efficiently.

Senator Rockefeller closed this part of the hearing by commenting that he expected the nominees to be confirmed easily. (N.B. They were confirmed by the Senate on July 15, 2009.)