

NASA Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request

[House Science and Technology Committee](#)

May 19, 2009

Chairman: [Bart Gordon](#) (D-TN) ([opening statement](#))

Ranking Member: [Ralph Hall](#) (R-TX)

Witness

Mr. Christopher Scolese, Acting Administrator, NASA ([prepared statement](#))

Background

NASA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 budget request is \$18.7 billion, an increase of \$904 million over the amount that was appropriated by Congress for FY2009. However, Congress included \$1 billion for NASA in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the "stimulus" bill), making a total of \$18.8 billion available to the agency for FY2009, so the FY2010 request is essentially the same as the FY2009 funded level. The request is for FY2010 and includes projected funding levels for the next four years (FY2011-2014). Much of the debate over the FY2010 request concerns those "outyears" rather than FY2010 itself, particularly whether the flat funding projected for the Constellation program to build new launch vehicles and spacecraft to return humans to the Moon by 2020 is sufficient. The White House has created a panel, chaired by Norman Augustine, to assess options for the future human space flight program. For more information, see the [hearing charter](#) prepared by committee staff and the [webcast](#) of the hearing.

Nuggets

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Chairman Gordon

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Mr. Scolese

Hearing Highlights

The predominant theme of the hearing was concern expressed by many committee members about whether the budget request for FY2010 and the outyear for the Exploration Systems Mission Directorate is sufficient to ensure that the new Constellation systems – the Ares 1 launch vehicle and Orion spacecraft – will be ready by 2015 as currently planned, and if the Ares V launch vehicle and Altair lunar lander will be ready in time to return humans to the Moon by 2020. These goals were set by the Bush Administration and endorsed by Congress in the 2005 and 2008 NASA authorization acts. Several members noted that the budget request shows a \$3 billion cut in projected funding for the Constellation program in FY2011-2013.

In his opening statement, Rep. Gordon praised the creation of the Augustine panel, but said that “the basic situation is already clear -- either the nation is going to have to give NASA enough funding to meet the dual challenges of carrying out its current and planned missions and of revitalizing the agency’s human and physical capital or the nation is going to have to agree on what it wants NASA to cut.” Rep. Hall also praised the selection of Mr. Augustine to head that panel.

Mr. Scolese said that the funding is sufficient for Ares I/Orion to be ready to take astronauts to and from the International Space Station by 2015, but not to achieve the goal of returning humans to the Moon by 2020. He stressed that NASA has not stopped work on Ares V, the larger launch vehicle required for the human lunar mission, but that NASA is assessing what they can do by 2020 under the current budget plan. “We couldn’t do the program of record -- putting humans on the Moon by 2020. We may be able to do something lesser in that time frame but we haven’t completed the work to answer that question fully.”

Rep. Hall suggested that additional funding for NASA could come from funds currently allocated to foreign assistance programs or from funds promised to fight AIDS in Africa.

A related issue is the 5-year gap between when the space shuttle will be terminated (planned for 2010) and when the new Ares I/Orion system will be available (planned for 2015), particularly in terms of the workforce implications. Mr. Scolese pointed out that NASA cannot know how many of the space shuttle workforce will be hired by contractors to work on the Constellation program so firm numbers on how many jobs may be lost are difficult to determine.

Rep. Kosmas and Rep. Rohrabacher both pointed out that we will be spending \$1.2 billion for Russia to fly astronauts to and from the International Space Station (ISS) during the gap. Rep. Rohrabacher asked whether the U.S. commercial sector might develop those types of capabilities instead. Rep. Kosmas wondered why we will be sending \$1.2 billion to Russia instead of paying workers here in the United States. Mr. Scolese said that there is no

alternative, since the United States must buy the Soyuz seats for emergency return in any case. (Soyuz spacecraft are always attached to the ISS as “lifeboats” to return ISS crews in an emergency. The United States does not have such a capability. The space shuttle can remain in orbit for only a few weeks at a time.) Mr. Scolese also said that NASA was relying on the U.S. commercial sector to develop commercial vehicles to take cargo to the ISS, and wants to stimulate companies to build a commercial crew capability as well.

Mr. Scolese assured the committee that the Administration is committed to flying the remaining eight shuttle missions and there no longer is a requirement that they be completed by the end of FY2010. NASA anticipates completing them by that time, but if there are schedule slips, there is no longer a prohibition against launching beyond that date. However, the budget assumes that shuttle flights will end in FY2010, so there would be budget implications of flying the shuttle longer. Rep. Grayson asked what would happen is the White House directed NASA to extend shuttle operations. Mr. Scolese said it would take additional funding that either would have to be provided to the agency or taken from the Constellation program