

OPENING STATEMENT
CHAIRMAN KEN CALVERT (R-CA)
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
Committee on Science
U. S. House of Representatives
Hearing on
The National Academy of Sciences' Decadal Plan for Aeronautics:
A Blueprint for NASA?
July 18, 2006

This afternoon I want to thank our distinguished panel for appearing before our Subcommittee to share their insights and recommendations on NASA's aeronautics research program. But before getting into the substance of my statement, I want to thank our witnesses for their patience as we wrestled with conflicting schedules that led to today's hearing. I apologize for the last minute postponement in June, and thank all of you for your willingness to appear today. One schedule conflict we were unable to resolve was getting a NASA witness; consequently, to ensure that all sides are heard, we plan to hold a second hearing in September featuring a NASA witness.

According to reports by the Aerospace Industries Association, the United States exported more than \$67 billion in military and civil aerospace products in 2005. The aerospace industry is a vital force behind our nation's economic engine and contributes significantly to our balance of trade. Because our negative balance of trade was at an all time high at the end of 2005, this figure takes on even more importance. Boeing alone is this country's largest exporter of manufactured products and draws on thousands of suppliers whose products are found on each jet.

The European Union has identified the importance of aeronautics in its "Aeronautics 2020" plan to become the world's leading supplier of aviation products. We, in the United States, must focus on our economic strengths and invest in high technology sectors to maintain global leadership. It is important to realize that NASA-developed technology can be found in virtually every airplane flying today. The return on the original investment has been tremendous!

With that as background, NASA's aeronautics program has, in recent years, been prone to changes in leadership and in program goals and strategies. There have been four Associate Administrators for Aeronautics Research during the last six years and each has sought to reshape the program. An inadvertent, but undeniable consequence of these changes has been the appearance that the agency has no clear strategic vision, and in the budget constrained environment that all of us must wrestle with, White House and Congressional support for aeronautics R&D has been waning.

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Earlier this spring two reports were issued by the National Research Council (NRC) that focused on NASA's aeronautics program. One recommended management changes that the agency should consider adopting to ensure maximum science return, especially when dealing with smaller budgets. The second report was the NRC's first ten-year plan recommending, in a priority fashion, the kinds of research NASA ought to pursue. Eighty-five aeronautics experts from academia, industry and federal labs met and worked over a one-year period to develop this consensus document, and it is my hope NASA will take it to heart. Other parts of NASA have used similar ten-year planning documents with great success, and I see no reason why aeronautics cannot do the same.

The current Associate Administrator for Aeronautics Research, Dr. Lisa Porter, who's been serving in her position for about 9 months, has, I believe, done an admirable job restructuring the program under very difficult circumstances. She has been very clear about her intent to refocus and strengthen fundamental aeronautics research at the agency, as well as develop a broad cooperative research program with industry. Dr. Porter has also committed NASA to work as a full partner with other federal departments and agencies in committing the necessary resources to the Joint Planning and Development Office as it strives to design and implement the next generation air traffic management system, and for this I commend her.

My thanks again to our witnesses for their appearance today. I now recognize the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. Udall, for his opening statement.

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