COMMITTEE *on* APPROPRIATIONS
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MIKULSKI OPENING STATEMENT FOR CJS HEARING ON NASA FY16 BUDGET REQUEST

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, **U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.),** Vice Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and of the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Subcommittee, attended a CJS hearing to review the fiscal year 2016 budget request for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The following are Vice Chairwoman Mikulski's remarks, as prepared for delivery:

"Since our last CJS hearing, you've probably heard I've decided not to run for a sixth term. The space community may be worried about what the future holds with one their best and strongest allies leaving. I want to assure them: though I've decided to turn a new page, I'm not ready to write my last chapter.

"I will still be here for another two appropriations cycles. In these next two years, I want to work with Chairman Shelby and fight to help NASA continue to be best at what it's best at, and best at what it's needed for.

"We are here today to examine NASA's fiscal year 2016 budget request of $18.5 billion, which is $500 million more than the fiscal year 2015 total of $18 billion. I am not happy about the total for NASA and am extremely disappointed in the specifics of the budget request that impact the balanced space program, Goddard Space Flight Center and satellite servicing.

"The budget request fails to keep ongoing missions on track and invest in key decadal survey science priorities. The request also proposes cutting Orion and the Space Launch System (SLS) by $441 million and the dark energy mission by nearly 75 percent to $14 million, which is $36 million less than fiscal year 2015.

"Goddard is a leader in earth observation and astronomy, yet NASA's request proposes a $300 million cut in their funding. In NASA's request investment in creating a new industry to repair and refuel satellites using techniques developed for the Hubble Space Telescope has been cut in half, from $130 million to $65 million.

"These cuts are unacceptable, especially because NASA's top line is growing. I'll be working with Chairman Shelby to reorder NASA's priorities.

"It will be difficult. NASA's request comes in the context of the President's total fiscal year 2016 request, which is $74 billion above the Budget Control Act caps for 2016. But I hope we can work together to raise the caps by replicating the spirit of the Murray-Ryan budget agreement, so we can fund NASA robustly.

"I support a balanced space program that funds human space flight, reliable and affordable transportation systems, and space science. My goals are to capitalize NASA's missions, do no harm and make NASA more effective and frugal by following the Inspector General's (IG) recommendations to make targeted reforms where needed. We need to end shutdown, slamdown politics, so we can make sure NASA has the right resources to retain talent and reach for the stars.

"Chairman Shelby and I are part of a reliable space coalition. Over the next two years, I want to grow that coalition and leave Senator Shelby with the next generation of champions for space.

"But why am I such a strong advocate for NASA missions? Hubble is a great example. Next week we will celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Hubble Space Telescope. Administrator Bolden who is testifying before us today helped launch it. Hubble showed us the age of the universe – 13 to 14 billion years – and that the universe is still expanding.

"Hubble is not just about the amazing science, Hubble is also about you – the people who imagined it, and fixed it. Three Nobel Prize winners have worked on Hubble: John Mather, Adam Riess and Riccardo Giaconni. I am so proud of NASA, Goddard and the Space Telescope Science Institute, and the many men and women – engineers, scientists, technicians and cafeteria workers – who support them.

"Some said Hubble wouldn't live past 2014, but here we are. Hubble is still going strong – and so am I. I'm to fight for science, for you and for space, for another two appropriations cycles!"

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