Statement of Dr. John P. Holdren
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Executive Office of the President of the United States
to the
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
on
Transition and Implementation: the NASA Authorization Act of 2010
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss America's future in space and our ability to maximize the probability of success following the recent signing of the 2010 Authorization Act for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Under the direction provided by this legislation, NASA will be entering a bold new era of innovation, exploration, and discovery. I would like to commend Chairman Nelson and Senator Hutchison in particular for your efforts in forging the key agreements necessary for this legislation and ultimately helping to bring it into effect.

When I testified before this Committee in May, I laid out the President's ambitious new strategy for U.S. human exploration activities, as reflected in his FY 2011 budget request and further elaborated in his landmark speech at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. This new approach included fostering the development of path-breaking new technologies; partnering with industry in new and more effective ways; advancing innovation and scientific discovery; pursuing human exploration with a more flexible, achievable, and affordable set of goals; and of course addressing the over-arching need to match program goals with resources. This new approach was developed in order to take us to more places sooner but also more affordably, while spurring the creation of new industries, technologies, and jobs that will be vital for long-term economic growth.

The 2010 NASA Authorization Act represents a critical step toward achieving the President's goals in this arena, including:

- Extending the International Space Station (ISS) effort until at least 2020 and supporting the goal of using this research outpost effectively; as the President proposed, the ISS can be a platform to further science and technology innovation, foster the creation of new industries, and help advance human exploration;

- Helping to advance a U.S. commercial crew transportation industry that can become the primary means of access to the ISS, thus harnessing our nation's entrepreneurial energies in more effective ways and creating new jobs, while also meeting an important national need;

- Accelerating a heavy lift vehicle development effort relative to what was planned under the Constellation program;

- Reinforcing an approach to human space exploration that will enable us to reach a range of destinations including Lagrange points, near-Earth asteroids, the moons of Mars, and eventually Mars itself;

- Initiating a new space technology program to increase the capability and decrease the cost of NASA, other US government, and commercial space programs;

- Endorsing the Summer of Innovation education initiative proposed by the Administration;

- Supporting the President's proposal to modernize the space launch complex in Florida, which will help these facilities more effectively support future NASA, other government, and commercial launches;

- Supporting a revitalized program in Earth science, enabling NASA to develop new satellites and other capabilities that are priorities in our efforts to enhance U.S. leadership in global climate change research; and

- Authorizing a robust aeronautics research program which will invest more in green aviation and in a more efficient national air transportation system, thus helping to promote both the economic and environmental health of this country.

This important change in direction not only helps chart a new path forward in space, it also helps us invest in the foundation for the skilled jobs and industries of the future. At the same time, it furthers our goal of placing NASA's programs on a more stable footing and ultimately enhancing the long-term sustainability of these efforts. As with any space-related endeavor of the scope and complexity of those outlined in the 2010 NASA Authorization Act, however, there will be technical, cost, and programmatic challenges going forward as these projects are undertaken and future appropriations are provided.

Indeed, much work lies ahead in terms of translating this new law into programmatic success. One immediate challenge is the lack of appropriations for FY 2011. We urge Congress to act swiftly to provide the funding and budgetary guidance that will enable NASA to implement the direction provided in the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 and bring this new plan to fruition. As we move further into FY 2011, it is my hope that we can work with you in resolving this situation as quickly as possible.

Whatever the other difficulties that may be faced over the long run, I am confident that Administrator Bolden and the dedicated men and women of NASA's workforce have the commitment, wherewithal, and passion necessary to pursue these initiatives and continue making progress toward achieving our boldest ambitions in this renewed journey of innovation and discovery in space. I look forward to working with Administrator Bolden, and other involved offices and agencies in the U.S. Government, as NASA moves to develop more detailed implementation and acquisition approaches in the months ahead.

Finally, let me reiterate that this Administration remains steadfast in its commitment to space exploration and to NASA's mission. As the President said in his speech at the Kennedy Space Center:

> *I am 100 percent committed to the mission of NASA and its future. Because broadening our capabilities in space will continue to serve our society in ways that we can scarcely imagine. Because exploration will once more inspire wonder in a new generation -- sparking passions and launching careers. And because, ultimately, if we fail to press forward in the pursuit of discovery, we are ceding our future and we are ceding that essential element of the American character.*

I think all of us here fully understand the space program's singular capacity to inspire future generations of scientist and engineers, and we recognize the crucial role that it plays in advancing scientific discovery, stimulating technological innovation, enhancing international leadership, and buttressing our economic vitality and strength. The Administration looks forward to continuing to work with Congress to achieve our shared goals and ambitions in space as we move forward with these programs.