
Astronauts Testify

Congress Told Why We Must Save NASA

by Marsha Freeman

From the moment it was released to Congress on Feb. 2, the Obama Administration's proposal to end NASA's manned space exploration program has drawn opposition and outrage from elected officials, labor unions, astronauts, entire communities in Florida and Texas, the aerospace industry, and, increasingly, from concerned citizens. The stunning victory of LaRouche Democrat Kesha Rogers in the primary campaign in her Johnson Space Flight Center district in Houston earlier this Spring, demonstrated the understanding among the electorate, that to "Save NASA," it is necessary to "Impeach Obama."

Since then, while the Administration has tried to "compromise" on its proposed complete shutdown of NASA's Constellation program—which involves the development of the Orion spacecraft to replace the Space Shuttle, and the Ares series of rockets to take men to the space station, and then to the Moon—the Administration's transparent lies, and probably illegal attempted end-run around the laws passed by Congress to continue Constellation, have stiffened the resolve of many Members to save the nation's manned space exploration program. This was demonstrated during the third hearing on Capitol Hill on NASA's exploration program, which was convened by the full House Committee on Science and Technology on May 26.

The Administration has been repeatedly accused of illegally slowing down or cancelling Constellation contracts with industry, which is expressly forbidden in laws passed by Congress last year. Incredibly, while these charges are still under investigation by the General Accountability Office, at the request of 17 bipartisan Representatives, NASA announced on the day of the hearing that Constellation manager, Jeff Hanley, was being ousted from his job, and "kicked upstairs." Hanley was well known as an outspoken supporter of continuing the Constellation program, at odds with the Administration's anti-science ideologues who put the present proposal to-



LPAC videograb

Kesha Rogers' (center) stunning victory in the Democratic primary in the Texas C.D. that is home to the Johnson Space Flight Center, showed that voters are ready to "Save NASA" and "Impeach Obama."

gether. Immediately, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee, joined by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Tex.), fired off a letter to NASA Inspector General Paul Martin, requesting an investigation into Hanley's "reassignment."

During the questioning of NASA Administrator Charles Bolden, Members made clear they do not support the attempt to destroy NASA. Rep. Lincoln Davis (D-Tenn.) asked Bolden to give his assurance that "America will not be in a Third World category in spaceflight." Rep. Donna Edwards (D-Md.) told Bolden, "I don't intend to stand for" you "acting outside your authority" by telling companies to get ready to terminate contracts, which termination the Congress has not authorized. "By now, you've probably figured out this Committee is not with you," one Member told the Administrator.

Fed up with the complete disregard for the responsibility and authority of the legislative branch of government to help direct the nation's space programs, the Committee invited two men of impeccable credentials, and the respect and admiration of the entire nation and the world, to counter the anti-American space program being proposed by the White House.

The Astronauts Speak

Invited to testify were the first man to walk on the Moon, Apollo 11's Neil Armstrong; and the last man to do so, Apollo 17's Gene Cernan. Both men, along with

Apollo 13 Commander Jim Lovell, had sent a letter to President Obama in April, describing the Administration's proposal to end Constellation along with the goal to return to the Moon as a "slide to mediocrity," and "devastating," not only for space exploration, but to the future of the nation. At the March 26 House hearing, Cernan described the proposed program as a "mission to nowhere." Armstrong, in reply to questioning from a Committee Member, explained why mankind should return to the Moon. Responding directly to the stupid remark by Apollo 11 astronaut Bill Aldrin—that sending humans to the Moon was no longer necessary, since he'd already been there (a remark which has been repeated by President Obama to justify the cuts in the space program)—Armstrong said that he finds this viewpoint "mystifying." It would be as if "President Thomas Jefferson announced in 1808 that Americans 'need not go west of the Mississippi, [since] the Lewis and Clark expedition has already been there.'" More than 14 million square miles are yet unexplored on the Moon, Armstrong elaborated, with opportunities for science, extracting helium-3, prospecting for metals, and "meeting challenges not yet identified."



NASA/Paul E. Alers

Apollo 17 Astronaut Eugene Cernan described the proposed space program of the Obama Administration as "a mission to nowhere."

But more important than these potential material gains, he said, is the importance of the leadership the U.S. demonstrates, by exploring the unknown. He recounted a trip he and Cernan had made to the Middle East a couple of months ago, to visit U.S. troops. They were invited to speak at a university in Turkey, just two days after the resolution condemning Turkish genocide had passed in the U.S. Congress, and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States had been recalled to Ankara. They were very wary of the reception they would receive. "The welcome was remarkable," Armstrong reported. Four to five times more people came to hear them speak than there were seats available. "Getting to the boundaries in human knowledge" transcends local or international events, he stated.

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'Rethink What Is Possible'

The response of many Committee Members reflected the profound nature of the thoughts presented by the astronauts. "I've been very nonplussed about the space program," Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-Calif.) said. "I took it for granted that space would be part of our country." She went on to recount how she and her family watched in awe as Neil Armstrong took that first step on to the lunar surface on July 20, 1969, recalling every detail of that extraordinary day, and the effect it had on her, and her children.

Rep. Alan Grayson (D-Fla.) thanked the astronauts for their inspiration, and the opportunity "to rethink what it is possible for human beings to do." "One thousand years from now, no one in this room will be remembered except for you," Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Tex.) told Armstrong.

Although the astronauts themselves proposed no solution to the existential threat to the space program posed by the disintegration of the global financial and economic system, they, and perhaps an increasing number of Congressmen, are realizing that ending America's manned space exploration program makes a mockery of continuing to think that we still live in what we have called the United States of America.



NASA/Ren Wicks

President Obama's shutdown of the Constellation program, if allowed to stand, kills the possibility of human colonization of Mars and beyond. Shown, an artist's concept of the first human mission to Mars in 2019.