

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

Recent Developments in NASA's Commercial Crew Acquisition Strategy

**Friday, September 14, 2012
9:30 AM to 12:00 PM
2318 Rayburn House Office Building**

Chairman Hall, thank you for holding this important hearing.

I was encouraged by SpaceX's successful cargo demonstration last May and am looking forward to its upcoming launch of an operational cargo flight to the International Space Station (ISS) in October. I hope that Orbital Sciences will likewise be successful.

While these milestones should be commended, it is important to note that crewed flights are a lot more difficult than cargo flights. As commercial crew development advances, I am concerned with NASA's reversal in its commercial crew acquisition strategy--using Space Act Agreements (SAA), instead of Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR)-based contracts for design activities and its possible affect on astronaut safety, which is of paramount importance.

Last year, NASA expressed to this committee that adherence to NASA's safety requirements could not be assured without using FAR-based contracts. NASA said that the risk of commercial partners' inability to meet its human-rating requirements could cause costly and time-consuming redesigns and pose safety concerns, thus requiring NASA to be more involved in the development of any commercial transportation system. As a result, NASA said Space Act Agreements could not be used.

Because NASA has since reversed itself by going back to using SAAs, I am eager to hear from our panel of experts on what this committee can expect going forward, whether astronaut safety is being compromised, and whether we can be assured that taxpayer funds are being spent wisely.

Mr. Chairman, I want to take a moment to recognize the loss of two American icons. Neil Armstrong and Sally Ride reminded us of the sheer ingenuity of the American public and the limitless possibilities available when Americans come together toward a common goal.

As his last hearing before this Committee, Mr. Armstrong cautioned that "*NASA, with insufficient resources, struggles to fulfill the directives of the Administration and the mandates of the Congress. The result is a fractious process that satisfies neither*". Acknowledging that progress is rapid and unstoppable in a technology-driven world he also said "*Our choices are to lead, try to keep up, or get out of the way. A lead, however earnestly and expensively won, once lost, is very difficult and expensive to regain*".

Their achievements, counsel and wisdom on space exploration speak to the importance of maintaining American preeminence in space flight and ensuring that NASA is adequately funded to meet future challenges.

Doing so would be a fitting way of honoring their courage, commitment, dedication, and exceptional accomplishments while maintaining American leadership in space exploration.