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**Statement of
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**before the
Subcommittee on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Federal Programs
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
U.S. Senate**

Chairman Tester, Ranking Member Portman, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the topic of employee morale and productivity in the Federal workforce.

At NASA, employee morale and productivity begins with a unique and exciting mission. Our orbiting outpost, the International Space Station, is home to a crew of astronauts from America and across the world, who are conducting research and learning how to live and work in space. We have scientists exploring with robotic spacecraft that are probing diverse regions of the solar system and the vast regions of interstellar space. We will soon launch the James Webb Space Telescope, which will allow our astrophysicists to see back in time to the formation of the first stars and galaxies. Our people are developing the aeronautics and space technologies for tomorrow's missions and we are preparing for a challenging mission to capture and redirect an asteroid for human exploration—a stepping-stone to future human exploration of Mars.

NASA is comprised of 35,000 contractors, 18,000 employees, 149 occupations, 50 states, 10 Centers, and one goal-- to reach for new heights and reveal the unknown, for the benefit of humankind.

But like any other large and complex organization, NASA faces management challenges in ensuring that we continue to engage our workforce and create a culture of innovation. Today, I would like to share with you three components of NASA's answer to these challenges.

First, we focus on connecting our people to each other and the mission every day. Connection begins at the top. The NASA Administrator, Charlie Bolden, fundamentally believes that communication is the cornerstone to connection, and he encourages every NASA employee to use his or her voice. He visits employees in their labs and other worksites to hear from them

directly about their work and their work life. And at a more aggregate level, the Administrator personally reviews the results of the Employee Viewpoint Survey, an annual survey administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to Federal employees, down to the Center level -- so he can understand how we are doing as an agency and how we are doing at each major subcomponent.

To make people more connected to each other, we are working hard to make geography inconsequential. We have made great improvements in effective virtual collaboration. We are able to conduct acquisition activities, panel interviews, international presentations, and entire conferences in virtual space. That has become an integral part of NASA culture.

We measure the connectivity of our workforce through an index that we have developed based on the Employee Viewpoint Survey. When we look at survey data, we take a long view. We look at 10-year trend lines and watch for improvement over time. Continuous improvement is far more important to us than an overall score or ranking. And we do this year round, not just in response to this year's survey.

Second, we ensure that first line supervisors appreciate the importance of developing innovative employees. A key to success in all areas of workforce culture is the first line supervisor. These are the people whose day-to-day decisions can take your agency's goals and mission further, keep you where you are, or set you back. We infuse our leadership values into potential leaders early in their careers. We have agency level leadership development programs, as well as leadership development programs at the Center level. These programs have a heavy emphasis on personal effectiveness, relating to others, and self-reflection. Approximately 500 NASA employees have gone through these two leadership development programs.

We measure our success by asking our workforce, using our Building Model Supervisors and Leaders Index that we developed from relevant categories of the Employee Viewpoint Survey. NASA has seen continual overall improvement, 7.9 percentage points, in this index over the last decade.

Third, we recognize and reward innovative performance by moving past traditional monetary recognition. We use every tool that is available to us as a Federal employer to recognize our employees and their achievements, and we ask our employees to tell us what kinds of rewards they find most meaningful. Ultimately, however, there is no greater incentive to innovation than to have one's creativity recognized and incorporated into the mission. And there is no greater pride than being able to describe one's contributions to the public. We encourage our employees to do so through a variety of means, including social media.

We are engaged in a constant search for better ways to work. We model the behaviors that we expect from others. Over the past year, we have worked to reinforce these principles by asking each senior NASA leader to engage in a reverse mentoring relationship—to be mentored by a

junior employee in the agency on a topic of their choice. This was a tremendously successful program that gave the NASA senior leadership the opportunity to walk a mile in another's shoes.

All of these efforts have paid off. The most recent Employee Viewpoint Survey was administered to the Federal workforce just a few short weeks following the issuance of the sequestration guidance. Despite serious challenges to the agency imposed by sequestration, including delays in vital programs, NASA employees were able to stay focused on the mission. Although most Federal agencies' scores on the Best Places to Work index declined, NASA's score increased.

Likewise, during the government shut down, our efforts to improve both the quality and content of workforce communications helped our employees weather the shutdown and return to duty. We had the entire agency shut down by 9:00 AM Eastern Time, including California. Following the shutdown we received several notes from employees thanking us for the quality and timeliness of the communications sent by the agency. Upon return to duty, NASA employees were greeted at the front doors by senior NASA leaders.

In sum, we have a robust NASA strategy to engage our workforce and create a culture of innovation. We do this by connecting our workforce to the mission and to each other, building model supervisors, and recognizing and rewarding innovative performance. We were not satisfied when NASA was rated the best place to work in the federal government in 2012. So not only did NASA get first place again in 2013 – our scores showed that we continued to improve.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be please to respond to any questions.