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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

August 29, 2012

Administrator Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
NASA
300 E St SW Mailstop 9042
Washington DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden:

As you know, in May I wrote you urging vigilance in spending on conferences, especially following the abuses reported about the General Services Administration (GSA) conference in Las Vegas and the questions surrounding the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Hawaii.

In your June 15 response to me, you wrote, "As the NASA Administrator, I take my responsibility and accountability for use of taxpayer dollars in this area very seriously..." and you outlined your process for reviewing NASA-sponsored conferences exceeding \$20,000 and non-NASA-sponsored conferences exceeding \$100,000.

That is why I was concerned to learn from the Web site NASAWatch.com that, "[s]ources report that 50 or more NASA employees will be attending the IAC (International Astronautical Congress) meeting from 1-5 October in tourist-friendly Naples, Italy."

While this conference merits participation by NASA, it is difficult to accept that taxpayers should fund travel, lodging and conference fees for "50 or more NASA employees" to visit Italy. If accurate, the cost of this travel and this level of participation would certainly conflict with my May 22 letter warning that excessive conference spending is not appropriate.

I would appreciate your response to the following questions by no later than September 7:

1. Is this report about NASA attendance at IAC accurate?
 - a. If so, please provide a detailed summary of NASA personnel who will be attending, the total cost for each employee's participation and justification for their attendance.
 - b. If not, please clarify the number of NASA personnel who will be attending, and provide the cost associated with employee's participation and a justification for their attendance.

Administrator Charles F. Bolden Jr.

August 29, 2012

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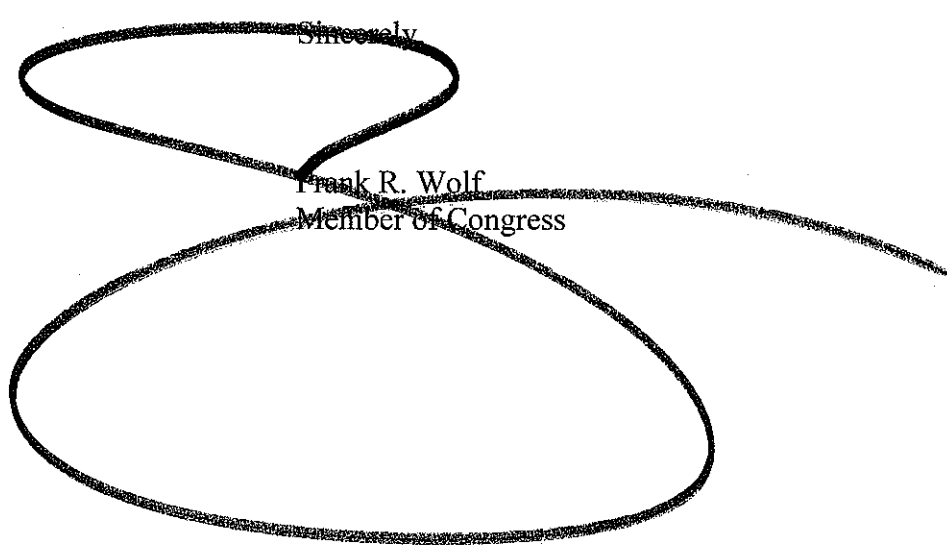
2. Given the protocols outlined in your June 15 letter (enclosed), were you aware and/or did you approve the participation of 50 or more NASA employees to travel to and participate in this conference?

I look forward to your prompt response.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right, is written over the typed name and title.

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May 22, 2012

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TELEPHONE:
(202) 225-2771

Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden:

I am deeply concerned about wasteful conference spending, such as the abuses revealed in the recent GSA Las Vegas conference scandal.

The attached Fox News report describes an extravagant Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference in Hawaii. Such actions not only raise questions about the possible waste of public funds; they also undermine public confidence in government.

I ask you to immediately reassess the Agency's conference policies and procedures and report back to the Committee by June 5, 2012, confirming that your policies and procedures are adequate to prevent waste and abuse. In your response please also confirm that any and all current year actual and planned conference expenditures represent necessary activities that are directly related to the mission and core responsibilities of the Agency, and adhere to legal and regulatory standards and the strictest standards of responsibility and accountability.

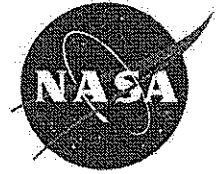
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Frank R. Wolf,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



June 15, 2012

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of May 22, 2012, requesting assurances regarding NASA's conference policies and procedures. You also asked for confirmation that all current year actual and planned conference expenditures are necessary activities, directly related to the mission and core responsibilities of the Agency.

NASA endeavors to fulfill our Space Act mandate while fulfilling the great responsibility we have to expend taxpayer dollars in a prudent fashion. We currently review any NASA-sponsored conference with total costs exceeding \$20,000, before proceeding with approval. Recently, in response to OMB Memorandum 12-12, we are also reviewing non-NASA conferences where attendance by NASA personnel may exceed \$100,000 for any one conference. In addition to limiting Agency participation in certain conferences, we have also challenged offices sponsoring Agency conferences to find innovative alternatives. I am being kept fully and currently informed of these efforts.

NASA is currently reviewing and refining several proposals that will further enhance our policies and procedures relating to conferences and plans to implement these by early summer. Moreover, to enhance reporting and approval processes, we are investing in a system enhancement to the Agency's Conference Tracking System, which will permit detailed planning and monitoring on a conference-by-conference basis.

As the NASA Administrator, I take my responsibility and accountability for use of taxpayer dollars in this area very seriously, and I would be pleased to discuss this matter with you in greater detail if you wish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Bolden, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator