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Akin Questions Decision to Retire Hubble Space Telescope Congressman notes telescope's unique research capability

Washington, D.C. - The House Science Committee received testimony Thursday from top NASA officials regarding the Administration's vision for the future of space exploration, including proposed manned missions to Moon and Mars and the cancellation of a shuttle mission to service the Hubble Space Telescope.

Congressman Todd Akin, a member of the House Science Committee, submitted the following statement regarding the proposed retirement of the Hubble Space Telescope by 2007 for the official record:

"As you know there has been a significant public outcry to save the space telescope, but I have also heard that some in the scientific community are very concerned about the impact to real scientific research capability that the loss of the Hubble Space Telescope may cause.

"Even though ground based telescope technology continues to advance, notably in adaptive optics to help combat the blurring effects of the Earth's atmosphere on astronomical observations, the Hubble Space Telescope still provides far greater resolution over greater fields of view than any ground telescope. The Hubble Space Telescope also provides tremendous ultraviolet capability that does not exist with Earth based scopes. Many astronomers consider the Hubble Space Telescopes ultra-violet (UV) capability very valuable. For example, I am told that UV light typically radiates from extremely hot, dynamic phenomena, such as the cores of active galaxies, quasars, energetic stars and vast disks of dust around black holes. Given the superior resolution and unique UV capabilities of the Space Telescope do we not risk the loss of a significant research capability with the retirement of the Hubble?"