



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

**Ranking Member Valerie Foushee (D-NC)
of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics**

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing:

*Step by Step: The Artemis Program and NASA's Path to Human Exploration of the Moon,
Mars, and Beyond*

February 26th, 2025

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am thrilled to serve as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics. We are at an exciting time, and I look forward to working with you and the Members of the Subcommittee and Full Committee to continue our bipartisan and critical work on ensuring a strong and vibrant future for civil space and aeronautics. Before we turn to the hearing, I want to first welcome our expert witnesses and thank you for being here to discuss Artemis and NASA's human exploration of the Moon, Mars, and Beyond.

Through the Artemis initiative, we'll land the first woman, first person of color, and the first international partner astronaut on the surface of the Moon. And I'm so proud that Christina Koch, who attended high school in my District, North Carolina's Fourth, will be part of the historic Artemis II crew, marking the first return of humans to the lunar vicinity in over a half-century. Artemis will advance our scientific understanding, test capabilities needed for sustained lunar activities, assess resources on the moon, and help us prepare for an eventual, groundbreaking human mission to Mars. Artemis is also attracting commercial innovation to advance these and other U.S. lunar activities.

Importantly, under Artemis, the United States of America, in hand with our international partners, will lead and shape standards, responsible behaviors, and best practices consistent with the peaceful exploration and safe utilization of outer space. In 2022, NASA successfully launched the Artemis I uncrewed demo mission that provided essential test data, including on the Orion heat shield. Artemis II preparations are well underway for a crewed demonstration to flyby the far side of the moon next year.

Even today, as we hold this hearing, a NASA-supported commercial lunar lander—the second to launch in just two months—is sitting on the launch pad ready to lift off. Both commercial landers carry NASA instruments and will attempt to set down on the lunar surface in early March. Despite these important milestones, NASA's Artemis campaign is not without challenges, including technical complexities, affordability, and schedule delays.

We can and we must seek improvements and corrections—and I mean with a scalpel not a chainsaw—, if we are serious about returning to the Moon with humans successfully again. It will take all of us working together to achieve regular, measurable progress, and to ensure that it

is done so safely. To that end, I am disappointed that NASA chose not to send a witness to testify today, despite being invited. I certainly hope such practice does not continue. Full transparency with Congress and the American public on an effort as important as Artemis is of the upmost importance.

But these are not normal circumstances. At a time when China is laser focused on sending taikonauts to the Moon by 2030, I cannot pretend today that the chaos, confusion, and cruelty levied on our Federal government workforce by the Trump Administration and its destructive executive actions – including the threat of mass firings, – will not negatively impact the United States and our standing around the world, or its efforts to return our astronauts, American astronauts, to the surface of the Moon, and to do so before China.

I will not sit idly and let our federal government, including NASA—a national crown jewel—be destroyed. Nor will I stand for handing the keys to lunar exploration to China. Doing so jeopardizes our economic and national security, and our geopolitical influence. It also risks the space research, technology, and services on which we rely here on Earth. We must protect and enable these essential capabilities as we also seek to push the boundaries of human exploration and activity beyond low Earth orbit.

To the NASA workforce, I want you to know that you are valued. We cannot accomplish NASA's inspiring and historic national endeavors without you. As Ranking Member of this Subcommittee, I commit to keeping the NASA workforce top of mind as we work to reauthorize NASA. You are our most important national asset.

Thank you Mr. Chair, and I yield back.