



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

Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Kendra Horn (D-OK)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics**

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Markup of:  
H.R. 5666, the “National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act  
of 2020”

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

Good afternoon. Today we’re marking up H.R. 5666, the bipartisan NASA Authorization Act of 2020. First, I want to express my appreciation to the original cosponsors of the bill, Ranking Member Babin, Full Committee Chairwoman Johnson, and Full Committee Ranking Member Lucas. This bill is the product of a bipartisan, across-the-aisle effort to support NASA and the nation with a strong, sustainable, and ambitious civil space program and to set NASA up for success for the long-term.

The Full Committee and the Subcommittee held a combined ten hearings involving multiple expert witnesses and perspectives to establish a strong foundation for this legislation. We also met with many stakeholders including trade and scientific associations, industry groups, nonprofits, individual companies, academic institutions, and others about their interests and issues for consideration as we developed the bill.

One thing I love about space is it goes beyond politics, any one administration, or generation. Space exploration has and continues to require Americans come together to achieve the greater cause of expanding our horizons and discovering what lies beyond our planet.

H.R. 5666 establishes a Moon to Mars Program and Program Office, requires a plan, and directs the development of the necessary technologies and program elements for implementing a serious program focused on sending astronauts to the surface of Mars. It continues to support robust and balanced science and aeronautics programs, and it directs ongoing leadership in planetary defense, among multiple other areas to advance the nation’s civil space goals and capabilities. It also leverages commercial space capabilities, including, directing the use of commercial logistical services for the Moon to Mars program and authorizes the Commercial Lunar Payload Services program.

Pushing the boundaries of human space exploration is hard. It requires long-term planning, funding, and a clear rationale for the mission. Getting to Mars is a bold and long-term endeavor that future Congresses and Administrations must continue to carry forward. H.R. 5666 directs the development of plans, funding profiles, and ongoing oversight of the Moon to Mars program. The bill also establishes an independent program analysis and evaluation office to assess performance and cost estimates. These tools help to provide NASA and Congress the ability to ensure the program stays on track. In addition, the legislation takes the fiscally responsible approach of setting clear rationale and purpose for those.

For too long, NASA's work has suffered from fits and starts as short-term political priorities change. If we are to remain the world's leader in space exploration, NASA needs a long-term sustainable plan that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and effective programmatic management. The NASA Authorization Act of 2020 takes a thoughtful approach to sending Americans to the moon, Mars, and beyond, an approach that decreases risk, and values the stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Our goal is to strengthen America's space program and to provide NASA with the framework it needs to develop a sound, evidence-based plan for space exploration.

This bill has stimulated considerable debate concerning the opportunities for commercial entities in the Moon to Mars program. And I am glad that the public and stakeholders care so deeply about NASA and our civil space program. But given some of the coverage and questions about the rationale and impact for the contents of the bill, let me be crystal clear: This bill is not about rejecting the Artemis program or delaying humans on the Moon until 2028. NASA can still work to safely get there sooner. This bill is taking the fiscally responsible approach of focusing the Moon efforts on the goal of being the first nation to set foot on Mars. Thus far, NASA has provided little to no details as to what, specifically, it will do on the Moon or how any Moon activities will be extensible to Mars. This bill does not pick favorites, rather it encourages companies and industry to participate in our nation's civil space program, which is led by NASA.

We must empower NASA to achieve the highest probability of success in carrying out its long-stated mission of getting to the Moon and Mars. In order to implement goals as challenging as sending humans to the Moon and Mars, there must be a leader and a body of institutional knowledge that can carry the program forward over decades. NASA is that leader and the backbone of American space exploration.

The clear recommendation from impartial expert witnesses was that "It is critically important that NASA has insight and oversight into the development of the human landing system including leadership of the endeavor. The most effective means of assuring NASA has the responsibility is the contracting approach with industry. NASA should be the owner of the landing system, not simply a buyer of seats and services," said Tom Young.

General Tom Stafford echoed these thoughts during the same hearing: "NASA should have strong insight and oversight of the [Moon to Mars] program from the first day. One of the main factors of the success of the Gemini and Apollo programs was the fact that the astronauts, engineers and management were deeply involved and working side-by-side with the contractors from the start."

Government responsibility and experience in taking on the inherent risks in challenging, cutting-edge missions, including those involving humans, enables the continued development of NASA's world-class workforce and technical capabilities. That skill and capability is what supports the emergence of new industries and a vibrant commercial space sector. H.R. 5666 leverages commercial capabilities, where appropriate, and establishes the pathways for future emerging opportunities.

In closing, I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues as we advance this bipartisan legislation for NASA and the nation's leadership in space. I urge Subcommittee members to support its passage out of Subcommittee in preparation for markup at Full Committee.

Thank you.