



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

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Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

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

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

I want to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Chairwoman Horn and Ranking Member Babin for all their hard work in crafting the thoughtful and bipartisan NASA Authorization bill that we will be considering today. It is a good bill, and I am proud to be an original cosponsor.

The legislation before us today recognizes the need for a balanced NASA portfolio of programs in human spaceflight and exploration, space and Earth science, aeronautics, technological innovation, and promotion of STEM education. It contains many important provisions to strengthen NASA’s role in each of those areas.

In that regard, I am especially pleased by the constructive and clear-eyed approach Chairwoman Horn and Ranking Member Babin have taken to move NASA’s Moon to Mars aspirations from the realm of rhetoric into serious consideration of what it will actually take to achieve the ambitious national goal of landing humans on Mars. If their efforts have generated some controversy, it is because they have done the hard work of clarifying what needs to happen if NASA is to reach Mars in a reasonable time period and for a reasonable cost.

And I would suggest that no one get too focused on the specific milestone dates proposed in the bill. If NASA is able to get to the Moon before 2028, or if it takes longer than 2033 for NASA to orbit Mars, that’s okay and is not precluded by this bill. I am more interested in maximizing the odds of success for this bold undertaking and making it as safe as any human journey into deep space can be, than I am in having NASA meet arbitrary deadlines. As NASA and its contractor teams undertake the hard work of turning viewgraphs into hardware and real mission plans, we will know soon enough what is realistically achievable and when. That in itself will be a significant step forward from where we have been to date.

I will have more to say about this bill when we consider it at Full Committee. In closing, I want to reiterate that Chairwoman Horn and Ranking Member Babin can take pride in what they have produced. We have for too long heard vague pronouncements about America going to the Moon and Mars and about all the wonderful things we can do on the Moon. Those vague

pronouncements are all well and good, but they don't constitute a credible program that will actually get this nation to Mars.

To their great credit, Chairwoman Horn and Ranking Member Babin recognize that the technical, programmatic, and budgetary challenges we face in getting to Mars are formidable and will require a laser-like focus to overcome.

In addition, they recognize—and I think Members on both sides of the aisle would agree with them—that there are many important national priorities competing for scarce resources, and funding for the human exploration of the Moon and Mars is going to be constrained. That puts a premium on investing in those activities and approaches that have the highest probability of success with minimum complexity.

It also means investing only in those human exploration activities and technologies that contribute most directly to achieving our goal of reaching Mars. If NASA—or Members of this Committee—want to add “nice to have” but non-essential lunar or other activities, then they need to identify where the money to do so is going to come from.

With that, I will once again say that this is a very good bill, and I look forward to its approval at this afternoon's markup.