

Testimony for the Record

Submitted to the
The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the U.S. House of Representatives
and Technology Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

for the Hearing
Leveraging Commercial Innovation for Lunar Exploration: A Review of NASA's CLPS
Initiative

April 1, 2025

Majority Witness: Jason Kim CEO, Firefly Aerospace

Chairman Haridopolos, Ranking Member Foushee, Chairman Babin and Ranking Member Lofgren and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for keeping America the leader in space exploration and maintaining a robust commercial space industry.

A month ago, Blue Ghost inspired America, and the world, when Firefly became the first private company to land successfully on the surface of the Moon. Thanks to NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services initiative, we completed the first fully successful lunar surface mission for our nation since the Apollo era.

My career launched from a nomination to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy by the late Sam Johnson of the 3rd Congressional District of Texas. I served 7 years in the Air Force before entering the private sector, where I continue to serve the nation within the industry, supporting NASA and National Security missions.

Out of the hundreds of space missions I have supported during my career, the proudest moment I've experienced was when Blue Ghost softly touched down on the Moon.

As Americans we have a responsibility to inspire the next generations of space explorers. Firefly contacted hundreds of K through 12 schools across the world and sent them posters that read, "Dream Big, you never know where you will land." Teachers, parents, and students sent letters cheering us on and told us they tuned into our Moon landing.

Our mission inspired humanity. Media coverage across the globe showcased Blue Ghost's breathtaking imagery of Earth and the Moon, including the first high-definition imagery of a lunar landing – as well as the first views of a total eclipse and a lunar sunset seen from the Moon's surface. With the help of Congress and NASA, Firefly is honored to lead America forward into the stars.

Blue Ghost operated 10 NASA payloads, conducting several first-of-their-kind demonstrations. We tracked GPS signals on the Moon, demonstrated new ways to mitigate hazardous lunar dust, robotically drilled a scientific probe into the surface – and more. In total, Firefly sent nearly 120 gigabytes of data back to Earth.

Bold innovation, vertical integration, robust testing, strategic partnerships, and the CLPS commercial model – I believe these are the key factors in the overwhelming success of our Blue Ghost mission.

Our bold innovation is imbued throughout Firefly’s culture and products. This allowed us to set a U.S. Space Force record with the VICTUS NOX mission, by launching our Alpha rocket after a 24-hour notice. The same boldness was exemplified with Blue Ghost landed on the Moon.

Vertical integration of our hardware and processes were instrumental in the success of Blue Ghost, with common teams, components, and facilities in Texas, California, Florida, and Virginia. We employ more than 750 Fireflies across the country, the innovators who unlock our success.

Prior to launch, Blue Ghost underwent robust testing of its systems and hardware. Our mission controllers prepared for operations by conducting rigorous simulations, totaling over 500 hours of rehearsal.

Firefly’s strategy incorporates teammates who are complementary to our portfolio and key to our production line. We partner with companies and laboratories, including NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory for environmental testing, SpaceX for launch, and Blue Origin for payloads, to name a few.

NASA’s CLPS model was the catalyst to our success. Together, we maximize efficiency in cost and schedule while minimizing risk to the taxpayer.

With each successful mission, we identify areas for enhancement. There are three ways Congress and NASA can bolster the CLPS initiative and stimulate the lunar economy:

1. Ensure stable, multi-year funding commitments for CLPS to maintain 2 to 3 annual missions to the Moon.
2. Foster a diverse supply chain and invest in critical spacecraft testing facilities and commercial communication systems that benefit all CLPS participants.
3. Promote the United States as a world leader in space exploration by using the CLPS firm fixed price model for exploration to Mars and beyond.

Firefly's Blue Ghost mission was an overwhelming success that exceeded expectations. Together with NASA and our mission partners, we created a lasting forum for American innovation and inspired generations to dream big. Thank you, I look forward to your questions.