



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Markup of:

H.R. 8958, the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2024

July 10, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Lucas. I am happy to join you as an original co-sponsor of the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Today the Science Committee reaffirms America's commitment to Space exploration, earth and space science, aeronautics, innovation, education, and inspiration. Through NASA's triumphs, dating back to the agency's establishment by this Committee in 1958, our nation has demonstrated to the world our preeminence in science and technology.

I am pleased that we are able to maintain this Committee's long history of bipartisanship when it comes to supporting NASA – and supporting our nation's science and technology enterprise more generally. While we are not in the Majority, and this is probably not the exact bill we would have introduced, much like the Space enterprise itself, through collaboration, hard work, and a good measure of patience on both sides, we have achieved good legislative results.

Our nation's investment in civil space has, and will continue to contribute significantly to innovation and economic prosperity here on earth. We can point to countless technology spin-offs from the space program that benefit the lives of Americans every day.

But many of the dividends that NASA pays are intrinsic and immeasurable. NASA's science and human space flight missions have inspired generations of Americans, reaching every corner of our nation. Their outreach and STEM programming have set countless young people on a path to a degree and career in STEM. Importantly, this legislation fully supports NASA's STEM education portfolio, including authorizing appropriations to include the Minority University Research and Education Project. This should be a clear message to our colleagues on the Appropriation committee that we will not shortchange the next generation and throttle our diverse research and aerospace workforce.

The Science that NASA undertakes also has very tangible benefits. For example, NASA's Earth science satellites and research are critical to understanding and responding to global climate change. Through this legislation we will improve our ability to detect large methane emission events and monitor greenhouse gases. Close to home for me, the NASA Ames Research Center does important work to improve aerial responses to wildfires, including by developing and testing drone technology and aerial operations for wildland fire response. This bill contains provisions that support all of this ongoing work.

NASA continues to support ever more compelling and complex telescopes and robotic missions. This legislation directs NASA to responsibly pursue a Mars Sample Return program in a manner that sustains scientific leadership, maintains robotic landing and operations capabilities, preserves expertise, while maintaining a balanced planetary science portfolio.

The legislation also directs NASA to continue operation of the Chandra X-ray Observatory at least until it completes a senior-level review. This great observatory gives us the ability to study the structure and evolution of the universe, and it is essential that any decisions about its future are made with community input through the independent reviews of operating astrophysics missions.

As the cadence of space activities increases, our mission must always prioritize safety. I am pleased that this bill contains important provisions regarding spacesuit safety and also de-orbit capabilities to prepare for the safe de-orbit of the International Space Station at the end of its operational life.

I appreciate the constructive input of the space and aerospace community, and NASA, as this bill came together. I thank Chairmen Lucas and Babin and their staff for their hard work, cooperation and consideration of our recommendations, and I want to give special thanks to Ranking Member Sorensen for his leadership on the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, and my space policy staff, Pam Whitney and Ashlee Wilkins, for their expertise and hard work. I yield back the balance of my time.