

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Space

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
*“An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Budget for Fiscal Year 2019”*
March 7, 2018

Good morning. Welcome Acting Administrator Lightfoot and thank you for your strong leadership of NASA over the past thirteen months. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 budget proposal for NASA is about \$19.9 billion. It is worth noting that NASA’s FY 2019 request includes an additional \$300 million to reflect an increase as a result of the 2018 Budget Act agreements. However, starting in FY 2020, NASA’s projected funding lowers to \$19.6 billion and it will be flat-funded in the out-years, losing buying power every year due to inflation. Mr. Chairman, in the context of the overall proposed federal budget, I recognize that \$19.9 billion for FY 2019 is a positive recognition of the important role NASA plays. However, there are some significant proposals in NASA’s budget request that could have profound impact on NASA’s current operations.

Foremost, the impact from establishing Exploration as NASA’s core mission needs careful examination. This is a change from the direction given to NASA just one year ago by the NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017. That Act which was enacted into law stated that *“NASA should be a multi-mission space agency, and should have a balanced and robust set of core missions in space science, space technology, aeronautics, human space flight and exploration, and education”*. What would a narrower mission for NASA mean?

- In space science, we run the risk of losing U.S leadership in astrophysics by no longer conducting the Astrophysics Decadal Survey’s highest priority mission, WFIRST. Losing leadership would mean that our partner nations may look to other countries, such as China, for collaboration.
- In aeronautics, cutting back the X-plane demonstration program could have serious economic impacts. In 2016, the U.S. had a \$90 billion positive trade balance from aviation, but other countries are catching up. NASA’s X-plane program is needed to keep us ahead.
- And in Education, we would miss out on lifting the skills and enabling the dreams of all Americans by no longer funding programs such as MUREP (Minority University Research and Education Program), EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research), and Space Grants.

Mr. Chairman, there are other areas that would change under this budget proposal:

The International Space Station is proposed to give way to potential commercialization of the ISS or commercial space stations in low Earth Orbit by 2025. However, Congress cannot fairly assess this proposal because NASA has yet to provide the ISS Transition Plan mandated in

the NASA Transition Authorization Act. In particular, as directed, the ISS Transition Plan is to include metrics that would indicate the commercial space sector's readiness and ability to assume the ISS functions, roles, and responsibilities being transferred.

Exploration priorities would focus immediately on exploring the Moon, first robotically and later by humans. I support lunar exploration, but the impact of this proposal on achieving the goal of humans to Mars cannot be assessed because NASA has yet to provide the Human Exploration Roadmap called for in the NASA Transition Authorization Act. That Roadmap is to include "*information on the phasing of planned intermediate destinations, Mars mission risk areas and potential risk mitigation approaches*".

Space technology development would be consolidated and become solely focused on Exploration. This comes in conflict with the NASA Transition Authorization Act's assessment of Space Technology, which views such work as enabling "*a new class of Administration missions beyond low-Earth orbit*" as well as research and development of advanced space technologies "*that deliver innovative solutions across the Administration's space exploration and science missions*". For example, this could mean that the Early Stage NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts initiative could show strong preference for proposals that advance Exploration objectives, rather than strategies and concepts that provide benefits across agency mission areas.

Mr. Chairman, NASA is a critical national asset. For nearly 60 years, it has been a source of technological and scientific innovation, an inspiration to generations of Americans, and a driver of economic growth. I want to work together to do what is necessary to allow NASA to do even greater things. Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back.