

OPENING STATEMENT
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
“*Charting a Course: Expert Perspectives on Human Exploration Proposals*”
February 3, 2016

Good morning. And welcome to our distinguished panel.

I have made it well known that I consider NASA to be a critical national asset. NASA is a source of technological and scientific innovation, an inspiration to generations of young people, and a catalyst for economic growth.

It is also a positive symbol of American preeminence worldwide and a demonstration of our commitment to international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Human exploration is a highly visible facet of NASA’s multi-mission portfolio.

It is thus appropriate to continue the Committee’s examination of the Nation’s human exploration strategy. At a June 2014 Committee hearing, we heard from the co-chairs of the National Academies’ review of the future of human space exploration in the United States. That comprehensive review was conducted at Congress’s direction.

As I said at the time of the hearing, the Academies report did not mince words. It provided us with an important “wake-up call”. The report’s conclusions were clear. We are not going to have a human space exploration program worthy of this great Nation if we continue down the current path of failing to provide the resources needed to make real progress and failing to embrace a clear goal and pathway to achieving that goal.

What we need now is a clearly articulated plan on how we will get to Mars--what we called a *Roadmap* in the House-passed 2015 NASA Authorization Act and what the Academies called a *Pathway* in their report.

In just about one year, the Nation will transition to a new Presidential Administration. Such transitions have, in the past, led to significant redirections in NASA’s human exploration programs. Mr. Chairman, if that were to happen again, that would be a tragedy, and a wasteful one at that.

NASA has made significant progress since the 2010 NASA Authorization Act was enacted. Fabrication of the Space launch System is underway, flight testing of the Orion vehicle is confirming design objectives, ground systems are being modernized, and ways of mitigating the effects of long term space travel are the subject of intense research on the ISS.

In that regard, Mr. Chairman, I hope we have an opportunity to hear from NASA, in the not too distant future, on the progress of its Journey to Mars strategy and how investments in SLS, Orion, and ISS fit into that strategy.

In conclusion, last week we honored the crews of Apollo-1, STS-51L, and STS-107. These brave men and women paid the ultimate price while furthering the cause of exploration and discovery.

We, as a Nation, owe it to them to continue this grand journey of exploration of the Universe. Future generations of Americans depend on us. We must not let them down.