

OPENING STATEMENT

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Subcommittee on Space
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Space Subcommittee Markup
NASA Authorization Act of 2014

April 9, 2014

Mr. Chairman, NASA is critical to this Nation, to our economic strength, and to our place in the world. NASA's accomplishments in human spaceflight, space science, aeronautics research, and space technology are the envy of other nations and a source of inspiration for all our citizens.

Helping NASA to maintain its leadership in all of these areas is one of the most critical responsibilities of this subcommittee. The 21st Century requires a robust space agency supported by a strong, vibrant, and innovative private sector.

Mr. Chairman, that is why you and I redoubled our commitment to working together over these last several weeks and months to develop a bipartisan NASA Authorization bill.

Today, we are marking up the NASA Authorization Act of 2014.

While the markup bill, as introduced, did not reflect all of the ongoing work that both sides had been doing to reach common ground, the bipartisan Manager's Amendment being introduced today is a major step forward and serves as an important example of progress that this Subcommittee and the full Committee can build upon.

First and foremost, the Manager's Amendment directs NASA to develop an Exploration Roadmap, one that will have the agency define the specific capabilities and technologies to extend human presence to the surface of Mars, and the sets and sequences of missions required to demonstrate such capabilities and technologies.

The Roadmap will allow NASA's technical experts to analyze the merits of potential interim destinations toward achieving the goal of sending humans to Mars.

I know that different Members have their own personal favorite destinations and interim missions, but this Amendment puts the job of deciding the pathway forward where it belongs by requiring NASA to develop an informed and realistic Roadmap to get this nation to Mars. Within

180 days – just 6 months – NASA will share that Roadmap with Congress and provide updates in the coming years.

There are other important aspects of the Manager’s Amendment worth mentioning:

I’m pleased that Manager’s Amendment unequivocally states that safety shall be the highest priority in the selection and development of commercial crew transportation services that NASA plans to use to transport U.S. astronauts to and from the International Space Station. We learned from the mistakes leading up to the Columbia disaster and we do not want to repeat them.

The Amendment recognizes the importance of robust science and aeronautics research portfolios and highlights the importance of NASA's space technology program in enabling new technologies and capabilities that will make NASA’s missions more affordable and reliable.

In this Amendment we have also removed the prohibition against cancelling “covered programs” without congressional action—those covered programs are no more protected than any other NASA program, nor should they be.

This Amendment will ensure that funds appropriated for these programs will not be sitting idle, but instead be put to productive use in making as much progress as possible on major development programs.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be achieving this markup milestone, and I thank you and Chairman Smith for your willingness to respond to many of the concerns raised by Ranking Member Johnson and me in the process of reaching this bipartisan Amendment.

And while the amendment covers a sizeable chunk of NASA’s roles and responsibilities, it is clear we still have more work to do in a number of important areas. I look forward to honoring our commitment and the commitments of our Chairman and Ranking Member to bring this to finality in a bipartisan fashion through the full Committee.

For example, I have made no secret of my view that we need to provide authorizations of sufficient length and magnitude to meaningfully reflect the funding required to carry out all the tasks we are asking NASA to undertake.

We were unable to do so for this markup, but I hope that by the time this bill has been enacted into law, we will have begun the longer term work to provide the funding guidance that Congress has a responsibility to render in the coming years.

We also need to continue discussions on NASA's education activities, on Earth Science, and a range of other topics so we ideally can include sensible provisions in these areas when we move to Full Committee markup. Their omission from today's markup in no way minimizes their importance—it just reflects the need to take the time to get them right and to be on the same page in the spirit in which we have engaged to this point.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, I know there other technical improvements that staff will continue to seek to make for us in preparation for a Full Committee markup.

I look forward to engaging Members on both sides of the aisle who have ideas for strengthening the bill. I am committed to maintaining a bipartisan product that reflects the high regard we have on both sides of the aisle for the agency, its workers, and the incredible private sector partners who think about the future every day.

Today, we can be proud to have reached common ground for this subcommittee markup.

Mr. Chairman, let us maintain our resolve to continue working together so that we can come up with an even better bill before Full Committee markup. Let us continue our progress on reauthorizing NASA and get a bill enacted into law.