



Chairman José E. Serrano
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
NASA's Proposal to Advance the Next Moon Landing by Four Years
October 16, 2019

The subcommittee shall come to order.

I would like to welcome NASA Administrator, Jim Bridenstine, and Acting NASA Associate Administrator for Human Exploration and Operations, Kenneth Bowersox, to the subcommittee.

Earlier this year, NASA commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the landing on the Moon, which remains the single most successful and famous mission in NASA's history. Just a week before our CJS bill was marked up in subcommittee, NASA submitted a \$1.6 billion budget amendment that intended to start the effort to advance the return of humans to the Moon by four years. Such little time prevented us from adequately considering the proposal. This hearing will give us an opportunity to obtain more information from NASA regarding its revised plans for returning to the Moon.

While all of us on this subcommittee would like to send the first woman astronaut into deep space, including to the surface of the Moon, we want to do so in a responsible way—from the perspectives of safety, cost, and likelihood of mission success.

As most of you know, I have been a strong supporter of NASA during my 29 years in Congress, and we provided NASA more than \$22.3 billion for FY 2020 in our House bill. However, I remain extremely concerned about the additional cost to accelerate the mission to the Moon by four years. Some experts have said that additional financial resources needed to meet the Administration-imposed 2024 deadline could exceed \$25 billion over the next five years, compared to the original 2028 schedule. To date, NASA has not provided the Committee with a full cost estimate, despite repeated requests.

At a time of huge financial needs across numerous government programs all competing for funding within the budget caps, an additional \$25 billion cost would severely impact vital programs not only under this Subcommittee, but across all non-defense Subcommittees.

Another concern that I have is the lack of a serious justification for such a cost increase. Since NASA had already programmed the lunar landing mission for 2028, why does it suddenly need to speed up the clock by four years—time that is needed to carry out a successful program from a science and safety perspective. To a lot of Members, the motivation appears to be just a political one—giving President Trump a moon landing in a possible second term, should he be reelected.

Not even NASA's own leadership has enough confidence in the success and safety of advancing this timeline. NASA Acting Associate Administrator Bowersox, who is a former astronaut and here with us today, referred to the 2024 moon landing date as difficult to achieve in a House Science hearing last month, saying quote "I wouldn't bet my oldest child's birthday present or anything like that." Additionally, NASA's Manager for the Human Landing System, Lisa Watson-Morgan, was quoted in an article about the timing of the mission saying, quote: "This is a significant deviation for NASA and the government... all of this has to be done on the fast. It has to be done on the quick... Typically, in the past, NASA is quite methodical ... which is good. We're going to have to have an abbreviated approach to getting to approval for industry standards for design and construction...and how we're going to go off and implement this. So, this is a big paradigm shift, I would say, for the entire NASA community, too." Unquote.

We cannot sacrifice quality just to be quick. We cannot sacrifice safety to be fast. And we cannot sacrifice other government programs just to please the President.

Before asking for such a substantial additional investment, NASA needs to be prepared to state unequivocally which NASA missions will be delayed or even cancelled in the effort to come up with an additional \$25 billion.

Overall, I remain extremely concerned by the proposed advancement by four years of this mission. The eyes of the world are upon us. We cannot afford to fail. Therefore, I believe that it is better to use the original NASA schedule of 2028 in order to have a successful, safe, and cost-effective mission for the benefit of the American people and the world.

Thank you once again, Administrator Bridenstine and Acting Associate Administrator Bowersox, for joining us today, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

Now, I would like to recognize at this time my good friend, the Ranking Member, Mr. Aderholt, for any opening remarks that he may have.