Ranking Member Frank Lucas Opening Statement at Full Committee Hearing on America in Space

Mar 13, 2019
Opening Statement
Welcome to the first space hearing of the 116th Congress. I'd like to welcome back Dr. Babin, the Ranking Member on the Space Subcommittee and congratulate Rep. Kendra Horn, the incoming Chairwoman of the Space Subcommittee. As a fellow Oklahoman, I look forward to working with you and Chairwoman Johnson.

We have a lot of work to do. These are exciting times for the nation's space enterprise. The investments of the past two decades are now coming to fruition.

- The Commercial Cargo program continues to deliver valuable supplies to the ISS.
- The Commercial Crew program took an important step just last week with SpaceX's successful return. We look forward to Boeing's uncrewed mission in the coming weeks, and crewed missions later this year.
- We are also in the final stages of developing the Space Launch System and Orion Crew Vehicle that will allow NASA to venture farther into space than ever before.
- We are in the early stages of developing the technologies necessary to return to the Moon as a stepping-stone to Mars and beyond.
- Our Earth observation and astronomical observatories continue to provide world-class science, and our planetary probes and rovers continue to explore the solar system.
- NASA is also pushing the boundaries of aeronautic research to keep our competitive edge internationally.

Even with all these promising efforts, we also face significant challenges. Schedule delays, cost over-runs, and technical errors not only harm individual programs, but also impact the agency as a whole. Delays to the Commercial Crew program have already forced NASA to purchase additional seats from Russia. Delays to the Space Launch System and Orion Crew vehicle are also having impacts. NASA's recent budget request proposes to launch the Deep Space Gateway and the Europa Clipper mission on commercial launch vehicles for the first time. Getting SLS and Orion on track for Exploration Mission 1

and 2 is critical to the long-term viability of these programs, as they are the systems that will push us further into the cosmos.

Unfortunately, challenges are not unique to human exploration. The James Webb Space Telescope was originally planned to cost between $1 and 3.5 billion and launch a decade ago, but now stands to cost roughly $10 billion and *might* launch in a couple of years. JWST is a once-in-a-generation observatory that will reinforce American leadership in space science for decades to come. But delays and over-runs will also have impacts on NASA for just as long. Other observatories like WFIRST, important grant funding, and missions outside of the field of astronomy and astrophysics, all end up paying that bill.

Outside of civil space issues, we must also be wary of implementing overly burdensome regulations that push the nascent space industry overseas. Companies have choices on where to incorporate, manufacture, and operate their space businesses. If we fail to create a competitive environment here in the U.S., and instead implement draconian regulations on an industry in its infancy, we stand to lose the competitive edge we now possess. Top-down space traffic management based on incomplete data, and stifling regulations on every activity in space, would be a recipe for disaster. I hope this Committee will continue to be a leader in proposing creative solutions that enable, rather than stifle, the commercial sector going forward.

But the biggest challenge facing NASA is constancy of purpose. The National Academies called for constancy of purpose in their 2014 report, and more recently, the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel went further stating. "*[t]he lack of consistent commitment negatively impacts cost, schedule, performance, workforce morale, process discipline, and—most importantly—safety.*"

Congress has been successful in maintaining a constancy of purpose across Administrations, but the task requires continued diligence. In the 2005, 2008, 2010, and 2017 Authorization Acts, Congress stayed constant despite numerous Administrations attempts to veer off course. NASA should build the systems necessary to explore the Moon, Mars, and beyond in a stepping stone approach that maintains the multi-mission nature of the agency. I trust the Committee's leadership will maintain that direction, and I look forward to working with them on that goal.