

Ranking Member Lucas Opening Statement at Full Committee Hearing on NASA FY20 Budget Request

Apr 2, 2019

Opening Statement

Our nation's space program is a source of pride. It exemplifies the greatest aspects of our country: the pursuit of knowledge; heroism; technical excellence; perseverance; and the intrepid spirit to chart a course into the unknown. Exploration is in our DNA, and no other nation embraces that gift more than the United States.

The Trump Administration has harnessed our spirit of exploration and proposed to focus our efforts to pioneer space. By maintaining consistency for major programs like the Space Launch System, Orion, and Commercial Crew, the Administration is ensuring that our national goals to explore the Moon, Mars, and beyond will be achieved rather than delayed. This constancy of purpose has also been demonstrated in this Administration's funding requests.

At first glance, the President's FY 2020 budget request appears to propose a reduction from the FY19 enacted appropriation. However, that does not tell the whole story. Year after year, the Trump Administration has proposed increased funding for NASA, only to have Congress appropriate even more than requested. For context, the current request calls for more than \$21 billion, while the previous Administration proposed a notional budget of just under \$20 billion for FY20. This Administration has added over a billion dollars to NASA's budget request – and that's before Congress appropriates final funding.

This is a blessing and a curse. As many watching this hearing have heard before – “no bucks, no Buck Rogers.” NASA is getting the bucks, so now it's time to deliver. Too often programs become complacent when funding is taken for granted. Congress and NASA need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. We need to ensure these programs stay on schedule and within cost. Congress, along with the reconstituted National Space Council, led by Vice President Pence, provide this oversight.

Last year the Space Council directed NASA to study efforts to fly crew on the first SLS mission. More recently, they reviewed ways to accelerate Exploration Mission 1. Last week, the Space Council met to review the current status of our exploration program. The Vice President challenged the nation to return

astronauts to the Moon by 2024. The current budget request that we are evaluating today does not enable that goal. I look forward to NASA updating their request so that the Committee can review those details.

Aside from the budgetary unknowns, we do have a robust proposal on how we can achieve Lunar exploration by 2024. The proposal focuses on the development of technologies that enable future exploration rather than deadend, one-off technologies. The goal of once again launching American astronauts on American rockets from American soil is fully enabled by this proposal.

The budget request plants the seeds for technologies that will be necessary in the future like landers, habitats, and in-space propulsion. It also proposes exciting new programs like the Mars Sample Return Mission. Science funding in this budget is nearly \$680 million more than NASA planned for FY20 under President Obama's last request.

This additional funding maintains support for the Europa Clipper mission, the Mars 2020 Rover, and the James Webb Space Telescope. It also supports Earth science and heliophysics priorities from the National Academies of Science, and the foundational research and analysis work that forms the backbone of our space science enterprise.

Aeronautics funding under the proposal is robust as well. It supports the demonstration of low-boom supersonic technologies that will hopefully inform regulatory relief of supersonic flight over land.

It also addresses hypersonics that are critical to our national security, technologies that will enhance air traffic management and allow the safe adoption of uncrewed aviation systems.

Importantly, the budget request is also responsible. It attempts to rein-in programs that bust their budget and defers the start of programs until they can demonstrate realistic cost, schedule, and performance metrics. The request funds the maintenance, operation, and facilities necessary to enable our space program. All too often these enabling functions are ignored, but we short-change these obligations at our own peril. Thankfully, this request recognizes the important role that Safety, Security, and Mission Services serves to facilitate space exploration, advance science, and protect lives and sensitive information.

Mr. Administrator, thank you for your appearance, today. I look forward to your testimony.