



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 272, H.R. 6219, H.R. 7687, H.R. 4152, H.R. 7630, H.R. 7686, H.R. 7073, & H.R. 7685

March 20, 2024

Thank you all for joining us at this markup.

Today we're considering a range of bills that span our jurisdiction, from research security to energy R&D to space.

As is traditional on this Committee, the bills are all bipartisan with solid support on both sides of the aisle.

We'll kick things off today with a handful of bills relating to our space sector.

First up is H.R. 272, the ASTRO Act, from Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin and Representative Jeff Jackson. This is a commonsense bill that addresses a longstanding issue at NASA regarding transportation of astronauts.

Currently, the NASA Administrator must approve ground transportation for each astronaut until they are cleared to drive after having flown in space. This is time-consuming and unnecessarily bureaucratic.

The ASTRO Act will give a blanket approval to transport astronauts after their missions until they are medically cleared to drive.

The next bill we'll consider is H.R. 6219, the ASCEND Act, from Representative Kean and Representative Bonamici.

This bill creates a commercial satellite data acquisition program within NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

By allowing NASA to procure commercial remote sensing data, this bill supports critical work in precision agriculture, natural disaster monitoring, and environmental management. I appreciate my colleagues' work to make remote sensing at NASA more efficient.

Next we have H.R. 7687, the NASA Streamlining Partnerships Act, offered by my friend Representative Sorensen and Chairman Babin. This bill allows NASA to receive funds from other federal agencies for scientific or engineering research and education.

This will strengthen our ability to conduct research by allowing comingled funds for important work, including experiments on the ISS.

Our final space-related bill is H.R. 4152, the Space Resources Institute Act, sponsored by Representative Caraveo. It directs NASA and the Department of Commerce to submit a report to Congress on the merits of establishing a space resources institute.

As we explore deeper into space, we will need to consider how best to utilize resources on the Moon, Mars, and beyond. Establishing an institute will help us consider this important topic thoughtfully. I thank my colleagues for their work on this bill.

Next we'll turn to two bills designed to improve our research security, both sponsored by Representative Garcia. The first is H.R. 7630, the ANCHOR Act. This bill directs NSF to submit a plan for much-needed updates to our academic research fleet to improve cybersecurity and modernize telecom equipment.

These research vessels allow us to conduct scientific research around the globe, helping us better understand our oceans, lakes, and polar regions. To do that, they require secure digital networking and communications. This bill ensures that they are not vulnerable to cyberattacks.

Our second research security bill is H.R. 7686, which updates the definition of malign foreign talent recruitment programs. By updating the definition from the CHIPS and Science Act, we will make it easier for universities and federal research agencies to identify and address threats to our taxpayer-funded research.

I'd like to thank Representative Garcia for his work on both of these important bills.

Finishing out our agenda, we'll consider two energy bills to strengthen American industry.

I'm proud to join Representative Weber and cosponsor H.R. 7073, the Next Generation Pipelines Research and Development Act, which invests in the R&D needed to modernize our pipeline systems.

Pipelines play a crucial role delivering energy across the country. As the Representative of Cushing, OK, the Pipeline Crossroads of the World, I'm well aware of the importance of this infrastructure.

Not only do pipelines carry the oil and natural gas that currently fuel our economy, but they'll also be critical in transporting next-generation fuels like hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and methane.

Today's bill invests in the research and development needed to strengthen today's pipelines and keep them functioning long into the future.

Our final bill today is H.R. 7685, the IMPACT Act, sponsored by Representative Miller. This bill strengthens our cement, concrete, and asphalt production while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This sector is critical to our infrastructure, our national defense, and our economy. It's difficult to reduce emissions in this sector, but it's critical that any low-emissions materials we use are just as efficient and effective as their counterparts.

This legislation directs the Department of Energy to conduct the research, development, and demonstration work needed to reduce emissions in the production of cement, concrete, and asphalt.

It builds on previous efforts to decrease emissions while increasing competitiveness, and I appreciate Mr. Miller's work on this bill.

As I said, that will be our final bill for the day. I want to thank all of the bill sponsors for working in a bipartisan manner to draft practical, smart legislation that addresses key needs.

I anticipate a smooth markup today, and I appreciate everyone in this room working together to make that happen.