



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Hearing:

An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

April 30, 2024

Good morning. I join Chairman Lucas in welcoming Administrator Nelson back to the Committee today to discuss the President's budget proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2025. We appreciate your leadership of NASA and your being here today.

Amidst what can be times of geopolitical, economic, and environmental strife, NASA continues to be a bright spot - a North star that sparks a sense of wonder and curiosity about our planet, our solar system, and the Universe. NASA's mission to advance space and Earth science, human exploration, aeronautics, space technology, and STEM education continues to bring us together. Here in Congress, there is broad bipartisan support for NASA's mission. Beyond the United States, NASA continues to lead a strong and growing body of international partners who join us in activities that serve the peaceful exploration and utilization of outer space.

The value of these intangible benefits cannot be underestimated. Nor can we forget the direct value that NASA R&D has on societal challenges such as climate change, space weather, and even on tracking and characterizing potentially hazardous near-Earth asteroids.

Today's discussion provides an important opportunity to examine NASA's progress toward meeting our policy goals for the United States civil space program; identify opportunities for improvement; and understand what NASA needs in budgetary, workforce, and infrastructure resources to the accomplish its inspiring mission.

The President's Fiscal Year 2025 request for NASA is \$25.384 billion, about a three percent increase from the enacted Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation and essentially flat from the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriation. The request enables progress in keeping the Artemis II demonstration on track, advancing Moon to Mars activities, investing in sustainable aviation, among other activities.

However, last year's debt ceiling agreement imposed caps on discretionary spending. That reality presents challenges for all our federal research and development agencies, and NASA is no exception. Under the FY2025 request for NASA, high priority science recommended in recent National Academies decadal surveys cannot be initiated. The timeline for Mars Sample Return is TBD. Previously selected science missions are being pushed to the right or even canceled, while other productive science observatories such as the Chandra X-Ray Observatory are proposed to

be phased out. For human exploration and spaceflight, NASA's plans call for transitioning from use of the International Space Station to commercial low Earth platforms at the end of the decade at the same time NASA also plans to begin an annual cadence of Artemis missions to the Moon. In short, a bow wave is building.

There is no sugar coating the current budget proposal. I recognize that tough decisions need to be made. It is essential for this Committee to understand what drove some decisions in the proposal over others as we evaluate the tradeoffs. It is also imperative that NASA has clear plans ready for action on the other side of the present budget horizon.

A lot is at stake. I'm especially concerned about the reductions in workforce, including those in my home state of California, resulting from prolonged mission timelines. Losing skilled talent is a further set back that can't be erased. We need to look holistically at the implications of the FY2025 proposal on the health of NASA now and into the future.

Will we help position NASA to meet the bow wave? Or will we stay on the tail as other nations that don't share our values advance? As Ranking Member, I will continue to ensure we position NASA for success and that the United States continues to lead in the exploration of outer space.

Thank you, and I yield back.