



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Full Committee Markup
NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026
February 4, 2026

I would like to welcome everyone to this morning's markup of a bill that is close to my heart and vital to sustained U.S. leadership in space: the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026.

For more than half a century, America has led the world in pushing the boundaries of exploration and discovery.

Where we have dared to go, other nations have watched, joined, and followed. We understand that our curiosity lies in the stars—and so does our national interest.

We stand at the cusp of sending astronauts back to the Moon for the first time since 1972. With Artemis II's impending launch on the ever-brightening horizon, there is no more important time to consider today's legislation.

As the verse from the Book of Proverbs inscribed on the wall behind me reminds us: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Our space program, like any great endeavor, flourishes when guided by a clear sense of what lies ahead. So what's next? How do we get there? When do we go? Those questions are answered by the bill before us today.

The NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026 ensures that America does not merely participate in the next era of space exploration—we lead it. It strengthens our commitment to returning astronauts to the Moon and building the capabilities needed to send humans onward to Mars.

It supports the systems, technologies, and partnerships required for deep space missions, while also fueling a growing commercial economy in low-Earth orbit that will sustain American leadership for decades.

With China nipping at our heels and investing heavily in its own ambitions beyond Earth, we cannot afford to drift without direction. This legislation ensures the United States sets the pace, establishes the standards, and carries forward the spirit of exploration that has long defined our nation.

It also invests in science, aeronautics, and workforce development that will power the next generation of discovery—because leadership in space is not secured by rockets alone, but by the people and ingenuity behind them.

At the same time, this bill helps chart the next chapter in low-Earth orbit. For more than two decades, the International Space Station has been the cornerstone of American leadership in space—a platform for research, partnership, and innovation.

Now, we are preparing for a future where commercial space stations carry that legacy forward, with NASA as a customer, American companies as providers, and the United States continuing to shape a thriving space economy.

When we look up at the night sky, we are reminded that exploration is more than ambition—it is part of who we are. Ours is a nation that has always moved forward across frontiers, across oceans, and now beyond our own world. The pursuit of knowledge is woven into the American story, and the next chapter will unfold far beyond Earth.

This legislation provides the steady direction needed to move confidently into that future. It enhances our ability to operate farther from home, encourages new partnerships, and supports the technologies that will open doors to places once thought unreachable.

And it is this Committee, through the work we undertake here today, that helps turn those aspirations into reality. The decisions made in this room help lay the groundwork for the milestones of tomorrow—the missions that will inspire the world and mark the next giant leaps in human exploration.

Moments like this do not come often. The choices before us will shape what the world sees when it looks toward space in the decades ahead. Will they see uncertainty—or resolve?

By advancing this bipartisan bill, we choose to move forward together. I want to thank Ranking Member Lofgren and her staff for their partnership and collaboration in bringing this legislation before the Committee.

What we advance here today will determine the next era of discovery and the legacy we leave behind. I recognize that several amendments have been offered and look forward to considering them as we strengthen this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill and carry America's journey among the stars forward.