



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

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Full Committee Markup of:

“H.R. 7273, NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026”

February 4, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Babin. I am glad to join you as an original co-sponsor of the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026. Today the Science Committee recommits NASA to fulfill its multiple missions in exploration, earth and space science, aeronautics, innovation, education, and inspiration. All of NASA’s triumphs, dating back to the agency’s establishment by this Committee in 1958, have demonstrated to the world our preeminence in science and technology. However, our Space primacy is not assured, and we cannot stay ahead of our competitors in the Chinese Communist Party without a robust well-funded agency that follows a clear consistent vision, powered by an unmatched workforce.

I am pleased that we are able to maintain this Committee’s long history of bipartisanship when it comes to supporting NASA. I am also happy that Congress resoundingly rejected the Administration’s proposed drastic cuts to the agency in our recently passed CJS Appropriations bill. Much like the space enterprise itself, through collaboration, hard work, and a good measure of patience on both sides, we have once again, achieved good legislative results.

Our nation’s investment in civil space has, and will continue to contribute significantly to innovation and economic prosperity here on earth. Countless technology spin-offs from the space program benefit the lives of Americans every day.

But many of the dividends that NASA pays are intrinsic and immeasurable. NASA’s science and human space flight missions have inspired generations of Americans. NASA Educational programming has set innumerable young people on a path to a career in STEM. Importantly, this legislation fully supports NASA’s STEM education portfolio. This should be a clear message to this administration that we will not shortchange the next generation and throttle our diverse research and aerospace workforce.

Science that NASA undertakes yields tangible benefits as well. For example, NASA’s Earth sciences are critical to understanding and responding to global climate change. For me this hits close to home. The NASA Ames Research Center does important work to improve aerial responses to wildfires, including by developing and testing drone technology and aerial operations for wildland fire response. This bill contains provisions that support all of this ongoing work.

This bill recognizes the importance of continuity of purpose for NASA's human exploration program. In about a month, four brave astronauts - Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch, and Jeremy Hansen - will begin a long journey to the moon. Humanity will once again demonstrate its extraplanetary ambit, and if we are true to our intent, there will be a future human presence on Mars. However, these lofty ambitions are not without real life management challenges that demand transparency related to schedules, cost, and government support for the human landing systems.

NASA will continue to support ever more compelling and complex telescopes and robotic missions. Congress will unequivocally show its support for the Nancy Grace Roman Telescope and the Goddard Space Flight Center team, so that humanity may have a grand encompassing view of our galaxy. This legislation directs NASA to responsibly pursue a Mars Sample Return program in a manner that sustains scientific leadership, maintains robotic landing and operations capabilities, preserves expertise, while maintaining a balanced planetary science portfolio.

As the cadence of space activities increases, our mission must always prioritize safety. This enterprise is inherently risky and I am not willing to ignore hard learned lessons to meet artificial expectations at the cost of people's health and safety. I am pleased that this bill contains important provisions regarding spacesuit safety and also de-orbit capabilities to prepare for the safe de-orbit of the International Space Station at the end of its operational life.

I appreciate the constructive input of the space and aerospace community, and NASA, as this bill came together. I thank Chairmen Babin and Haridopolos and their staff for their hard work and cooperation, and I want to give special thanks to Ranking Member Foushee for her leadership on the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, and last but not least I thank my space policy staff, Pam Whitney and Ashlee Wilkins, for their expertise and hard work. I yield back the balance of my time.