

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Space

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
"The ISS after 2024: Options and Impacts"
March 22, 2017

Good morning, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on "*The ISS After 2024: Options and Impacts*".

I'd also like to welcome our witnesses and I look forward to your testimony.

220 miles above our earth, the International Space Station, a complex assembly of interconnected nodes and modules weighing almost a million pounds and spanning the length of a football field, orbits our Earth more than 16 times a day.

NASA and its international and commercial partners have overcome many challenges during the many years of design, development and assembly to ensure the continued safe and productive operations of the Space Station, and I want to thank NASA's employees, supporting contractors, researchers, and partners for their continued dedication and commitment.

The current mission, ISS Expedition 50, is testing lighting effects to improve crew health and investigating changes in tissue regeneration while in space, adding to a growing array of scientific, biomedical, and technology research being carried out on the ISS.

As NASA's focus has turned to a vibrant research program, supported by a frequent schedule of visiting vehicles for crew transfer and cargo delivery, it is sometimes easy to forget how hard human space flight really is.

Aboard the ISS, NASA is enabling the research, skills and capabilities that our astronauts need for taking the next step--moving out into exploring deep space.

Taking these next steps is something this Committee and Congress have supported through multiple NASA Authorizations, most recently the NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017 that is now law.

However, as we set our sights on sending humans beyond low Earth orbit, we also face difficult funding decisions.

Several independent panels have concluded that if we want to both extend the ISS past 2024 and undertake a meaningful human exploration program, we need to provide the required funding.

Otherwise, we need to choose between ending NASA's role in ISS in 2024 or reconsider our goals and expectations for human exploration beyond low Earth orbit.

The ISS is currently authorized to operate through at least 2024. Within the next few years, Congress will need to decide whether to extend the ISS beyond 2024, and what role NASA should have in low Earth orbit once ISS operations cease.

So, I'm pleased we have the opportunity today, Mr. Chairman, to hear from our witnesses on a number of questions:

What is the status of the critical ISS research tasks needed to enable long-duration human space flight?

What would be the impact of another ISS extension on NASA's deep space exploration program?

What is the status of NASA's plans for low Earth Orbit following the end of ISS operations, whenever that happens?

Will there be sufficient demand to support commercial activity in low Earth orbit as NASA shifts its focus to deep space exploration?

I look forward to our discussion this morning.

Thank you, and I yield back.