

OPENING STATEMENT  
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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Space  
*“The ISS after 2024: Options and Impacts”*  
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Good morning, and welcome to our witnesses.

The International Space Station is the largest and most complex science and engineering project ever carried out in space. It serves as a laboratory for fundamental and applied science as well as an observation platform for astronomical, environmental, and heliophysics research.

The International Space Station is also a stepping stone for the human exploration of deep space, helping us to better understand the health risks of long-term human spaceflight and how to address them, as well as providing a testbed for some of the key technologies astronauts will need to safely explore deep space.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, the Space Station has had a broader value to our society and to our global relations. The success of the U.S.-led International Space Station partnership has been an important example to the rest of the world of our capacity to see past geopolitical differences to achieve challenging goals in space.

And of course, the Space Station has provided an entry point for emerging commercial ventures in low Earth orbit. Commercial cargo delivery, and soon, commercial crew transport are just two examples of the way in which the ISS has helped to stimulate commercial activity in space. Research carried out by companies on the ISS that could not be done in the same way back on Earth is another example.

While the Space Station’s value for science, commerce, and exploration is clear, the time left to realize that value is limited. We need to understand what, if any, ISS-based research needs be sustained once ISS operations cease, and what the options and likely costs for doing such research are.

The International Space Station has demonstrated that productive research and development can be carried out in low Earth orbit. While I want to see a robust research program continue, I also want to see NASA achieve the challenging goal of returning humans to deep space.

Doing both will require significant resources, and I hope that we will provide NASA with sufficient resources to do both. Let me be clear—we should not fool ourselves that it will be possible to carry out a meaningful human exploration program and extend the operations of the ISS without providing NASA with additional resources. If we are unwilling do so, then we have some hard choices to make.

Finally, while the focus of today's hearing is 2024, I am also concerned about the health of the ISS program today. President Trump's recently released Fiscal Year 2018 budget would cut NASA's Space Operations account—an account that funds the International Space Station—by more than a quarter of a billion dollars. This Committee needs to understand the rationale for that proposed cut and its impact on the ISS, and I hope that our NASA witness will be able to shed some light on it today.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I want to again thank our witnesses for participating in today's hearing, and I yield back the balance of my time.