

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Ami Bera (D-CA)
of the Subcommittee on Space

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space
*“60 Years of NASA Leadership in
Human Space Exploration: Past, Present, and Future”*
September 26, 2018

Good afternoon.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for calling this hearing on *“60 Years of NASA Leadership in Human Space Exploration: Past, Present, and Future”* and welcome to our witnesses. It is not often that we have the privilege of hearing from a panel composed of only active NASA senior executives.

Mr. Chairman, this Subcommittee and its Members know that NASA has done a lot during its 60 years of operation and their human spaceflight accomplishments continue to have a special place in this country’s history. I have often talked in this committee about how Apollo and the Moon landing drove my interest in science and my desire to become a physician. After serving on this committee, I know that I am not alone in having been inspired by NASA. Sadly, the missions planned to follow *Apollo 17* were cancelled and we never were able to explore the Marius Hills volcanic domes on the Moon nor the Copernicus crater. As we all know, many of NASA’s missions take years to complete.

With the goal of sending humans to the surface of Mars, the sequence of activities leading up to that goal will likely occur over several decades or more. Prior starts and stops and unscheduled transitions have taxed NASA’s workforce, its supporting contractors, and the communities surrounding NASA centers. That’s why it’s critical that we find a way to sustain a multi-decadal program over several Congresses and Administrations.

Late last Friday, NASA finally provided the Committee with its National Space Exploration Campaign report. Although I am appreciative of receiving it, I would have hoped it came closer to the December 1, 2017 due date established in law. And while we are certain to have additional opportunities to discuss the details of the plan, today I hope to hear from NASA how this new campaign will enable, as the agency states in the report, an innovative and sustainable program of exploration that *“does not assume or require significant funding increases”*.

However, there are fundamental issues related to sustainability that we also need to discuss today. These include:

- *What allows a human space exploration to be sustainable? What can NASA centers do to ensure sustainability?*

- *What negative impacts have centers and their surrounding communities experienced during past human spaceflight program transitions, both scheduled and unscheduled?*

Do existing conditions at the centers and their surrounding communities make the re-occurrence of such negative impacts less likely or more likely, and does it vary by center?

- *Has NASA identified any gaps in the skills, knowledge, experience, or expertise needed to carry out its planned human spaceflight activities? Does NASA require additional authorities to address any workforce-related shortcomings?*

Well Mr. Chairman, as you can see, we have much to discuss today. Thank you and I yield back.