



COMMITTEE ON
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REPUBLICANS | Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

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**Opening Statement of Space Subcommittee Ranking Member
Brian Babin**

**Space Subcommittee Hearing on NASA's Deep Space
Exploration Plans**

(Washington, DC) – At today's House Science, Space, and Technology Subcommittee on Space [hearing on NASA's Deep Space Exploration Plans](#), Subcommittee Ranking Brian Babin discussed the challenges and opportunities of human space exploration. "This is not only one of the most exciting issues, but it is also one of the most exciting times for space exploration," Babin said. "We have a renewed sense of urgency and purpose that is coupled with focus, leadership, and enthusiasm. I am excited to be involved in our nation's space enterprise at this moment in history."

Babin's full statement follows:

Thank you, Chair Horn. As this is the first formal hearing of the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee in the 116th Congress, I would like to formally welcome you to the Committee. I look forward to working with you on one of the most exciting issues we deal with here in Congress – space exploration.

This is not only one of the most exciting issues, but it is also one of the most exciting times for space exploration. We have a renewed sense of urgency and purpose that is coupled with focus, leadership, and enthusiasm. I am excited to be involved in our nation's space enterprise at this moment in history.

We have a unique opportunity before us. We have an Administration that put forth a bold direction, and we have an agency that stands ready to meet that challenge. We've seen proposals to reinvigorate NASA before, but we are uniquely positioned at this moment to capitalize on the investments made over the last two decades.

Unlike President Kennedy's challenge to put a man on the Moon within the decade, we have already made the investments in the systems that will turn that challenge into reality. We now have robust centers and infrastructure, an eager workforce, a modern industrial base, a hungry commercial sector, a vibrant space market, and years of hardware development under our belt. We are in the final stages of developing the Space Launch System, we've already conducted a test flight of the Orion capsule, and ground systems at the Kennedy Space Center are being built as we speak. The President has provided direction, focus, and enthusiasm, which will only help us continue making progress.

That isn't to say that we don't have work to do. Specifically, we need a clear plan and a realistic budget proposal. We need to be cautious about developing a plan that is overly ambitious or costly, and we need to ensure that OMB sufficiently funds the plan in subsequent budget requests.

We must develop next generation space suits and human-class landers, scale-up in-space propulsion and life support systems, and properly mitigate radiation hazards. We must also develop these capabilities in an extensible manner that enables an evolvable architecture that can explore not only the Moon, but also Mars, and beyond. As the National Academy's "Pathways to Exploration" report recommended, NASA should develop technologies that feed-forward from one mission to the next and reduce or eliminate the development of "dead-end" technologies.

Furthermore, Space Policy Directive 1 directed NASA to “[l]ead an innovative and sustainable program of exploration with commercial and international partners to enable human expansion across the solar system and to bring back to Earth new knowledge and opportunities.” Developing a plan that takes into account both the principles of extensibility and sustainability will be challenging and require NASA to make difficult decisions going forward, but I believe NASA is up to the task.

We must also be mindful of artificial schedule pressure. The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel has noted in several reports that it is important to set challenging, but achievable schedules and not allow undue schedule pressure to lead to decisions that adversely impact safety and mission assurance. Maintaining a balance between setting challenging yet achievable goals and taking prudent steps to ensure safe operations will certainly need to be addressed in any future plans.

Humanity will commit to the task of exploring the cosmos. The only real question is whether the United States will lead in that effort. I, for one, will do everything I can to ensure that we do.

Before I yield back my time, I would like to make one final observation. The Administration is still finalizing their Lunar plans. While this hearing is helpful, and I realize NASA previously committed to delivering a plan to the Committee by now, holding the hearing without new details seems premature. I would respectfully recommend that we hear from NASA once the plan is finalized.

Thank you.

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