



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

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Opening Statement

**Chair Kendra Horn (D-OK)**  
**of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics**

Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics Hearing:  
*Keeping Our Sights on Mars Part 2: Structuring a Moon-Mars Program for  
Success*

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

Good afternoon and welcome. I'd like to extend a special thank you and welcome to our distinguished witnesses. We're honored to have you here with us today to continue an important conversation about our human exploration program.

Over the past 30 years, multiple blue-ribbon panels, Presidential Commissions, and advisory bodies have consistently set the Moon and Mars as goals for our human exploration program. And as I've said before, I want Americans to be the first to set foot on the Red Planet.

Sending Americans to land and explore the surface of Mars is a monumental and worthy goal – one I believe we should embrace. Taking that giant leap will require every ounce of this nation's commitment and capability.

The critical questions before us now are what decisions and actions are needed to structure a Moon and Mars program for sustainability and success?

We're here today to seek the guidance, perspectives, and deep expertise of two eminent witnesses—one Apollo astronaut and lead on one of the foundational studies on a Moon-Mars program, and a former industry executive and Director of NASA's Goddard Spaceflight Center. They have unparalleled depth and breadth of experience in human space flight, industry, and other NASA programs. They have faced the hard technical challenges, seen what has worked and what hasn't. The lessons they have learned and their wisdom are critical to our work today.

We know that the road to sending American astronauts to Mars will require a commitment and direction that continues across many Congresses and Administrations. It is our job to lay out a course that ensures consistency through those changes in leadership.

Achieving such an audacious endeavor requires ambitious yet realistic expectations and the planning, leadership, workforce, and resources to increase the probability of success. Anything else runs the risk of perpetuating a cycle of human exploration visions left unmet.

The United States has led space exploration for over a half-century. Our leadership role has changed the way we interact with the world and the way the world perceives us. However, we cannot take our leadership for granted.

Today, our nation has been without a domestic capability for sending humans into space for nearly a decade. At the same time, there are an increasing number of nations and private entities actively utilizing and growing their investments and capabilities in space.

It is critical that we move beyond low Earth orbit and that we do it **sustainably**, affordably, and safely. Any void we leave in that regard, others will fill.

The bottom line is we have a choice: do we want to lead or follow?

Following is not the legacy our Apollo heroes deserve as we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Moon landing. Nor is it a future that ensures the leadership, safety, and national security of America in space.

Leading requires consistent purpose and direction; carrying out and achieving complex and challenging goals; and leading with partner nations and commercial industry in the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space.

Over the past 20 years, we have had a taste of the cost and effort involved in leading and maintaining long-term human spaceflight activities. Developing, assembling, and operating the International Space Station took over a decade to complete, represented a U.S. investment of over \$80 billion dollars, and requires about \$3 billion a year to support. Getting to the Moon and Mars will require much more.

The decisions we make today about the structure of a Moon-Mars program extend beyond the next handful of years: they are about what we set-up for future generations. In a July 2019 article in *Physics Today* one stakeholder stated, “Despite its success, Apollo was canceled due to its expense, and NASA lacked any follow-on program.”

That is why it is imperative that we take this opportunity to hear from our witnesses on what it takes to create a **sustainable** and effective pathway toward sending humans to the Moon and Mars.

We as a nation know what we are capable of achieving. We’ve landed humans on the Moon, supported humans living and working in space continuously for almost 20 years, and landed and operated spacecraft on the surface of Mars. We must build on those hard-earned lessons as we look for innovative, expeditious ways to achieve our goals while also ensuring responsible use of our taxpayer resources.

It is our role on the Subcommittee and the Committee to structure a program that’s in the best interest of the country and that has the greatest likelihood of success.

Before I close, I want to make clear that our focus today and in other exploration hearings in no way minimizes the importance of NASA's science, space technology, and aeronautics programs. All of these missions contribute to NASA's success and we need to ensure they remain healthy and strong.

I look forward to our witness's testimonies and I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to set NASA and our human exploration programs up for success now and into the future.