



Opening Statement of Space & Aeronautics Subcommittee Ranking Member Brian Babin

Space Subcommittee Markup

H.R. 5666

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

Thank you Chairwoman Horn. H.R. 5666, the NASA Authorization Act of 2020 represents a good start to advancing our Nation's space program.

The bill supports the Administration's bold goals of returning America to the surface of the Moon and on to Mars.

The bill jumps-starts Artemis with the direction to create a Moon to Mars Program Office, something the Appropriators did not support in the recent Omnibus.

The bill codifies the goal of returning to the surface of the Moon by 2028, something that the Senate was only able to support as a non-binding Sense of Congress.

It is important to note that nothing in this bill inhibits NASA from returning to the lunar surface by 2024 if they can.

The bill continues support for Orion, the Space Launch System, and Exploration Ground Systems, and calls for increased flight rates of these critical exploration capabilities, which was a concern expressed by the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel.

The bill also formally authorizes development of a Gateway in cislunar space, and allows for it to support missions to the Moon and Mars.

Additional developments specifically authorized for the first time in the bill include Exploration Space Suits and ISS Space Suit upgrades that leverage the expertise of the Johnson Space Center, and a Mars Transport Vehicle.

The bill allows for unfettered lunar resource development and the development of a lunar outpost so long as they are separately accounted for in NASA's budget request, just as many other activities like exploration research and development, advanced exploration capabilities, and space technology work.

The bill encourages international and commercial partnerships, and even carves out logistics and cargo supply exclusively for commercial providers. Furthermore, it formally codifies the Administration's Commercial Lunar Payload Services proposal.

The bill directs NASA to continue operating the ISS until at least 2028, supports continued progress on Commercial Crew and Cargo to once again launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil, and allows NASA to move forward with commercial low-Earth development plans.

Turning to science, the bill ensures a balanced portfolio of science activities, including the authorization of a new program to search for dangerous near-Earth asteroids; completion of the James Webb Space Telescope; and other National Academies decadal survey priorities.

Finally, the bill strongly supports NASA's aeronautics, space technology and education programs.

But let me be clear, this is not an ideal bill. It is not the one I would have put forward had we been in the majority, but I can count and the majority would likely have the votes to get a bill out of committee with or without our support.

Through working with the majority, I believe we have significantly strengthened their proposal in a way that fully supports the Administration's priority goals laid out in Space Policy Directive 1. I look forward to continuing to work with the majority to incorporate input from all stakeholders, including the Administration, as we move forward.

It is clear that more work needs to be done to ensure that all stakeholders and Members are comfortable going forward. Specifically, the language on human landers could be strengthened to align with the Administration's goal of using public private partnerships that allow contractors to put "skin in the game." Administrator Bridenstine even hinted that this would be necessary after reviewing their FY2020 Appropriations.

This is the beginning of the process. I look forward to working with my colleagues going forward to ensure this Committee produces a bill that will be acceptable to take to the floor at some point in the future.