



Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Space Subcommittee Markup

H.R. 5666

Wednesday, January 29, 2020

Thank you for holding this markup, Chairwoman Horn. Today, the subcommittee will mark up H.R. 5666, the NASA Authorization Act of 2020. This markup is the first of many steps in the legislative process that will undoubtedly yield a much-improved product from what lies before us today.

Last March, Vice President Pence announced an ambitious goal to return astronauts to the Lunar surface in five years. I, along with several of my colleagues on the committee, offered strong support of this goal. NASA subsequently named this effort the Artemis program and we have seen tremendous progress from NASA toward this goal in the ten months since this announcement.

During the drafting of this bill, I made clear my top priority is to ensure that this committee supports the Artemis program and that nothing in this legislation would be a roadblock to NASA putting astronauts on the moon by 2024. I would not have joined this bill as a cosponsor if I believed it inhibited NASA's efforts to achieve this goal. Rather, I believe this bill provides NASA the authorities necessary to achieve this goal and continue progress toward the long-term goal of sending humans to Mars.

This bill provides the infrastructure necessary to achieve the Vice President's goals by maintaining strong support for the Space Launch System and the Orion crew module. The bill authorizes the gateway, which would be known as the Gateway to Mars under this bill. The bill also establishes a Moon to Mars program office, which will allow NASA to better coordinate its efforts to send astronauts beyond low earth orbit.

While the bill's human exploration provisions receive the majority of attention, it is important to remember that NASA has a broad mission and this bill provides tools and authorities to carry out this mission. This bill authorizes important science missions and instruments to explore the solar system and answer fundamental questions about the universe. The legislation directs NASA's research efforts to help create safer, faster commercial air travel across the country. This bill also directs the National Space Council to prepare a report on China's space capabilities and recommend a strategy to Congress on how best to maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration.

The bill before us is not the NASA authorization the Republicans on the committee would have offered if we were in the majority. However, I recognize that we are in the minority and the legislative process offers opportunities to improve the legislation.

In the days since this bill's introduction, I have heard from a wide range of advocates representing all aspects of space exploration both praising and raising concerns about the bill. I want to assure them I intend to continue working to ensure that the House-authored NASA authorization bill is the best product we can put forward that balances NASA's priorities and resources.

Thank you, Chairwoman Horn. I yield back.