



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing
Returning to the Moon: Keeping Artemis on Track

January 17, 2024

Good morning. I want to welcome everyone to the Science Committee's first hearing of 2024. It's fitting that we're kicking off the year with a hearing on Artemis, given its importance to our space program and to U.S. competitiveness.

My top priority since becoming chairman of the Science Committee has been to ensure American competitiveness and leadership in the fields of research and technology development. This includes U.S. activities in space, especially human exploration.

The importance of U.S. leadership in space is why some of our top legislative priorities this Congress include a NASA authorization bill, which we will consider this spring, and the Commercial Space Act.

It has been almost seven years since a comprehensive NASA authorization bill was signed into law, and that is simply too long for an agency of NASA's importance. Much has happened during that period, and this Committee should provide direction to NASA's activities for the coming years, especially in the area of human exploration.

How we address future human exploration beyond Low Earth orbit is undoubtedly a topic we will address in the NASA authorization bill. Artemis is a cornerstone of that effort.

I am confident that I speak for everyone on this committee when I say we all support Artemis. This committee has long directed NASA to return humans to the Moon and eventually Mars.

But this Committee's support of Artemis means asking detailed questions of NASA and providing oversight of the agency's proposals. Congress must have proper insight into the agency's planning and execution of this mission to ensure its success.

This also means listening to inputs from external stakeholders and hearing differing viewpoints, which is why we have assembled a panel of witnesses with a variety of perspectives today.

Last week, NASA announced the delay of Artemis 2 to September 2025 and Artemis 3 to September 2026. I look forward to hearing from NASA about the cause of these delays and potential impacts to future missions, and about the steps it is taking to mitigate future risks.

We have a responsibility to not only our constituents, but the international community to see that Artemis is executed in a timely and fiscally responsible manner without sacrificing safety.

I remind my colleagues that we are not the only country interested in sending humans to the Moon. The Chinese Communist Party is actively soliciting international partners for a lunar research station and has stated its ambition to have astronauts on the human surface by 2030.

The country that lands first will have the ability to set a precedent for whether future lunar activities are conducted with openness and transparency or in a more restricted manner.

I am grateful to our panel for appearing before us today to share their experience and expertise. I look forward to a productive discussion on how we can ensure the success of Artemis and the best way for the U.S. to be the world leader in human space exploration.

I now recognize Ranking Member Sorensen for his opening statement.