



## **Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas**

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing  
*Risks and Rewards: Encouraging Commercial Space Innovation While Maintaining  
Public Safety*

September 10, 2024

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This Congress, a consistent theme of the Committee's work has been to ensure U.S. competitiveness in science and technology, including our nation's commercial space activities. This is particularly important as we examine space policy and consider how best to continue leadership from the U.S. commercial space sector.

To this end, we have considered the role commercial entities play in the future of space exploration, and how collaboration between government and industry can both further national space objectives and support the development of a space economy.

Importantly, we have also considered how the federal government can authorize and supervise the activities of nongovernmental entities without limiting innovation and technological achievements.

In 2018, the Trump Administration's Space Policy Directive-2, commonly known as SPD-2, triggered a government-wide review of the administrative framework applicable to space operations. SPD-2 directed agencies to streamline licensing processes and otherwise reduce the burden of regulatory compliance for space operators. Five years have passed, and it's time to assess the effectiveness of these reform efforts.

Today's hearing will review the licensing process for launch and reentry activities, administered by the Department of Transportation via the Federal Aviation Administration. In 2020, FAA issued the "Streamlining Launch and Reentry License Requirements" final rule. This sought to establish a single licensing process that applied for all types of launch and reentry operations by replacing the existing prescriptive requirements with performance-based criteria.

Now, three years since this rule went into effect, we seek to understand the impact of the new licensing process and the extent to which it accomplished the goals of SPD-2. We will consider progress in implementing the rule and identify areas which may benefit from further improvement.

Beyond our review of launch licensing, we also consider the approach behind the United States' regulation of space activities of all kinds. How did the existing structures evolve over time and what lessons can be learned as we look to grant new authority over in-space activities? How have past efforts affected the pace of innovation, and how do we continue to encourage commercial space activity moving forward?

Last fall, this Committee addressed many of these issues in the Commercial Space Act, sponsored by Chairman Babin. This legislation provided regulatory certainty to the American commercial space sector while streamlining the licensing process for launch and reentry.

The morning that we marked up that legislation, the National Space Council unveiled a legislative proposal for mission authorization that, while well-intentioned, created more burdens for our commercial space industry. This proposal would require commercial operators to go through a maze of regulatory agencies before launch and creates a confusing process for even the most seasoned regulatory experts.

This is why we must advance the Commercial Space Act and not wait for another Congress to act. I hope my colleagues will join me in moving forward this important legislation.

I thank our witnesses for joining us today. Each of our panelists today brings a different perspective on these issues, and I look forward to hearing their thoughts.