



Opening Statement of Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Chairman Mike Haridopolos

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing
*Step by Step: The Artemis Program and NASA's Path to Human Exploration of the
Moon, Mars, and Beyond*
February 26, 2025

Welcome to the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee's first hearing of the 119th Congress.

I extend a warm welcome to Ranking Member Foushee and express my enthusiasm to work with both new and returning members of this subcommittee.

2026 will be a defining year for the legacy of the United States.

Next April, NASA is set to launch the Artemis 2 mission, sending American astronauts into orbit around the Moon for the first time in fifty years.

If we succeed, we will clear the path for Artemis 3 in 2027, when American astronauts will once again step onto the lunar surface and plant the Stars and Stripes.

This is the most significant moment for America's space program since the Apollo program.

We stand at a crossroads: The world is watching, and our competitors—like Communist China—are racing to beat us there.

We cannot afford to fall behind, this is an opportunity to prove that America still leads the world in exploration and innovation.

Failure is NOT an option.

To succeed, we need the same relentless pace and ironclad determination today that won us the Space Race in the 1960s.

With each mission, NASA tested new systems, tackled new challenges, and carried us one step closer to Neil Armstrong's giant leap for mankind.

At the height of the Apollo Program, NASA launched seven crewed missions in less than two years.

That achievement was fueled by patriotism, urgency, ingenuity, and an unshakable belief in American greatness.

Returning to the Moon has not been without its challenges.

Over the years, changing directions and requirements have resulted in schedule delays and cost overruns.

Not only must we return to the Moon and establish a presence, but we must do it while spending significantly less money than the Apollo missions.

That makes every taxpayer dollar given to NASA precious.

We aim to get the Artemis program back on track.

Thanks to President Trump, NASA has clear direction.

Now, we must ensure that NASA carries out that direction in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.

I plan to conduct close oversight to ensure that every dollar NASA spends moves us closer to the Moon and to Mars.

We must also remember that we are in a race to the Moon, and that there are consequences for coming in second.

The Chinese Communist Party has set its sights on landing on the Moon by 2030.

The nation to establish a foothold there will shape the norms of behavior for generations of exploration on the lunar surface.

I refuse to let a communist dictatorship set the rules of the road for the future of space.

Now is not a time for half-measures. The next few years are critical to our national interests and our place in the world.

We are in a race to the Moon, and America must win that race.

Our journey to the Moon is in service to a greater goal, one that President Trump outlined in his inaugural address: "To plant the Stars and Stripes on the planet Mars".

Since 2005, Congress has backed a step-by-step path to human exploration, with Mars as our ultimate goal.

A mission to Mars will be the defining moment of our era.

It will be longer and even more difficult than a lunar landing, which is why we must prepare ourselves for the journey.

The Moon is our crucial stepping stone—a proving ground to test technologies, refine operations, and reduce risks for that future Mars mission.

Every step we take towards the Moon is a giant leap towards Mars.

To my fellow Americans, you deserve to know your dollars are spent wisely. We will conduct careful oversight to ensure that NASA operates at the highest standards, and we will settle for nothing less than efficiency, productivity, and results.

This is a chance to remind ourselves what we're capable of when we unite behind a shared goal.

Mars is on the horizon, but the Moon is where we first prove ourselves.

I thank our witnesses for joining us today. Let's get to work.