



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

NASA: Past, Present, and Future

Chairman Smith: NASA has a storied past. The witnesses before us today are proof of that. They personify the accomplishments of our American space program.

Joining us today, we have two legendary astronauts, two accomplished scientists, two preeminent engineers, three space advisory body members, leaders from both the private and public sector, and accomplished managers.

We have the only scientist to walk on another celestial body, a test pilot that has flown 120 different types of aircraft and three different space vehicles, a revolutionary leader in stealth technology development, a former Senator, a former Lieutenant General, a former NASA center director, the mission director for the first robotic landing on Mars, and NASA's former chief scientist, all in four people.

Their impressive accomplishments give them the credibility to discuss the future of our space program.

We stand at a crossroads. Sir Isaac Newton said, "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Today, as we consider the next steps of the space program, we are all like that boy – or girl.

Presidential transitions offer the opportunities to reinvigorate national goals. They bring fresh perspectives and new ideas that energize our efforts.

Now is the time to reaffirm our support for the bold visions and commitments that will shape America's future in space.

The NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017 is the culmination of many years' discussions and hopefully will soon pass the Senate and House.

This legislation has two goals. First, it reiterates the importance of maintaining NASA's continuity of purpose.

The National Research Council's "Pathways" report, the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel's recent reports, and numerous outside advisory groups and associations have all highlighted the significance of continuity. Without it, our space program will be left adrift and rudderless.

Second, the bill allows the president to introduce a Fiscal Year 2018 budget request that reflects his priorities.

With a fresh perspective, the White House will be able to work with the new Congress to implement the goals and initiatives necessary to continue our leadership in space.

Our hearing today provides an opportunity to understand fundamental challenges before the new administration and Congress.

And we will explore possible directions for our space program that will benefit and inspire the American people.

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