



COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**  
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas**

### **Space & Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing**

#### *Developing Core Capabilities for Deep Space Exploration: An Update on NASA's SLS, Orion, and Exploration Ground Systems*

September 18, 2019

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When we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Moon landing this summer, it was a great reminder of the great things we can achieve with perseverance, technical excellence, and a pioneering spirit. The Trump Administration has harnessed this spirit of discovery and focused our human space exploration efforts. By staying the course on programs like the Space Launch System, Orion, and Exploration Ground Systems, the Administration is ensuring that our national goals to explore the Moon, Mars, and beyond will be achieved. This support is backed up by this Administration with its robust funding requests.

Year after year, the Trump Administration has proposed increased funding for NASA Exploration Systems, only to have Congress appropriate even more than the Administration requested. This year the Administration took the extraordinary step of amending their budget by requesting an additional \$1.6 billion to accelerate our return to the Moon by 2024. This will serve as a down payment on the systems necessary to enable this goal. The primary elements are already well under development.

The Space Launch System, the Orion Crew Capsule, and the Exploration Ground Systems will serve as the foundation for the future exploration of the Moon and Mars. Congress has also provided consistent funding for advanced capabilities like the Exploration Upper Stage and additional Mobile Launch Platforms. These will accelerate the development of a 130 ton launch vehicle, which is optimum for deep space exploration.

But this steady funding is a blessing and curse. Too often programs become complacent when funding is taken for granted. Congress and NASA need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and ensure these programs stay focused, on schedule, and within cost.

But adequately funding SLS, Orion, and ground systems are only part of what is needed for Lunar exploration. NASA also needs to develop a Human Lander and associated support systems. NASA's budget request already plants the seeds for technologies that will be

necessary, but it is scheduled to deliver a more detailed plan with their fiscal year 2021 budget proposal. I look forward to reviewing the upcoming request.

Nearly 30 years ago, western Oklahoma's favorite son, Gen. Tom Stafford, delivered a report titled "America at the Threshold." Folks, we are once again at the threshold and our actions now will determine our future leadership in space. But unlike 30 years ago, we have hardware ready to be delivered, an Administration with a sense of urgency, and a Congress that is onboard.

We also have new challenges to our leadership in space. Last year China conducted the most launches in the world. They have already launched crewed missions and a temporary space station. They landed a rover on the far side of the Moon – a first for humanity - and plan to land a crew on the Moon in the coming years. They are also seeking international partnerships. We have a responsibility to ensure that America remains the world leader in space exploration, and that humanity's push into deep space is led by freedom and liberty rather than communism.

As our nation once again stand at the "threshold" of deep space, it is up to Congress to fund the program appropriately. It is also up to NASA to develop a plan that maximizes the down payments made on SLS, Orion, and Ground Systems. We cannot afford to cede our leadership in space exploration. I trust we can all work together to achieve our shared goals.

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