

Directs the NASA Administrator to establish a commercial satellite data acquisition program under NASA's Science Mission Directorate to satisfy the scientific, operational, and educational requirements of the Administration.

Extended Summary:

H.R. 2600, the ASCEND Act, authorizes NASA's Commercial Satellite Data Acquisition (CSDA) program. Formally establishing the program will enable the Administrator to continue acquiring essential Earth remote sensing data from commercial providers to meet the agency's needs. Moreover, acquiring commercial data will support U.S. industry providers while enhancing NASA's remote sensing capabilities and bolstering the agency's scientific research.

Additionally, the ASCEND Act:

- Ensures that acquired data and imagery may be published for scientific research and analysis.
- Requires NASA to prioritize procurement of data and imagery from U.S. vendors to the greatest extent practicable.
- Directs NASA to submit an annual report to Congress detailing all data and imagery acquisitions made under the program.

Background:

- NASA established the CSDA program to evaluate whether data from commercial remote sensing companies could meet the needs of NASA's Earth Science Division.
- The program has demonstrated success in supplementing NASA's observational capabilities with cost-effective, high-quality commercial data, supporting scientific research, disaster response, and improving our understanding of the Earth.
- By emphasizing procurement from U.S. vendors and allowing for the scientific publication of acquired data, the bill promotes domestic industry, transparency, and broader access to vital Earth observation data.
- The ASCEND Act does not authorize new appropriations, as the program will continue to be supported through existing NASA funds.