

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



For Immediate Release
June 25, 2014

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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
Hearing on Pathways to Exploration: A Review of the Future of Human Space Exploration**

Chairman Smith: At a fundamental level, space exploration—the mission of NASA—is about inspiration. This inspiration fuels our desire to push the boundaries of the possible and reach beyond our own pale blue dot.

When the President cancelled the Constellation program in 2010, our chance to explore beyond low-Earth orbit was significantly delayed. To the dismay of the American people, the Administration made it clear that human space exploration was not a priority.

The first human footsteps on the Moon are a distant memory. And, with the retirement of the Space Shuttle, NASA now pays Russia \$70 million to transport an American astronaut to the International Space Station and back.

There's a sense that America is falling behind, with our best days behind us. Today, America's finest spaceships and largest rockets are found in museums rather than on launch pads.

The President has proposed capturing an asteroid and tugging it into lunar orbit for human exploration. But NASA's own advisors said, "it was not considered to be a serious proposal." Space exploration experts have criticized this plan before our Committee. And former NASA officials have called into question its merits.

The Administration's continued focus on costly distractions is harmful to our space program and does not inspire future generations to go into innovative fields such as science and math. However, a distinguished panel of experts has concluded that a return to "extended surface operations on the moon" would make significant contributions to landing people on Mars.

The same has not been said for the Asteroid Retrieval Mission, which is a mission without a realistic budget, without a destination and without a certain launch date.

The witnesses before us today represent decades of public policy work and scientific investigation. They co-chaired The Committee on Human Spaceflight that recently released a report entitled "Pathways to Exploration-Rationales and Approaches for a U.S. Program of Human Space Exploration."

This report confirmed that NASA lacks a plan for human space exploration. The NASA Authorization Act, which recently passed the House, requires a detailed plan for how NASA will land humans on Mars. This report offers suggestions on the best way to reach that goal.

Meanwhile, the Obama Administration continues to advocate increasing climate change funding at NASA at the expense of other priorities such as space exploration.

There are 18 federal agencies that fund climate change research, but only one does space exploration. The future of America's exploration efforts lead to Mars. Just as the first steps on the moon were by Americans, the first flag to fly on another planet in our solar system should be that of the United States.

Great nations do great things. President Kennedy's call to America wasn't just about reaching the moon, it was a reminder that we are an exceptional nation. We must rekindle within NASA the fire that blazed the trail to the moon.

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