

SST Committee Member Day Hearing
Rep. Brian Babin (TX-36)
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Thank you, Mrs. Johnson for allowing me the opportunity to address all of you today. I am proud to serve as both the Ranking Member on the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, and also on the Environment Subcommittee. With the limited time I have, I would like to lay out a few of my priorities and encourage the Committee to work together to accomplish as many of these as possible this Congress.

Our nation's space arena - whether it be in commercial, civil, or defense - is growing exponentially. We, this Committee, are faced with challenges that set the stage for us to lead the discussion on how to navigate this growth and maintain - or better yet, grow - America's role as the world's preeminent space fairing nation.

To do that, I believe we need to focus on three areas:

First: we must re-evaluate the way we regulate commercial space activities. As a committee, we should be encouraging the creation of conditions for economic growth and opportunity right here - not making it so hard to participate that we push high-tech, space-focused companies abroad. In the 115th Congress, the House passed the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act that would have accomplished this goal while streamlining the bureaucracy into a one-stop shop at the Department of Commerce. All while maintaining our compliance with the Outer Space Treaty. This Committee unanimously approved the ASCFEA last Congress before we sent it to the floor where it passed without opposition. Let's do it again.

Secondly: as access to space continues to increase, so does the need for more significant steps to be taken in terms of space safety — specifically, issues relating to Space Situational Awareness and Space Traffic Management, but also with regard to how we investigate accidents.

And third: thanks - in large part - to the leadership of this Committee in years past, the United States is closer now than ever to launching American Astronauts, on American rockets, from American soil. Couple that with this Administration's ambitious plans to return to the Moon by 2024, the Science, Space, and Technology Committee is going to have its hands full in ensuring we accomplish the goal of a sustainable presence on the Moon as we push outward to Mars and eventually beyond. All of this, while also being responsible stewards of the taxpayer's dollar.

I represent the Johnson Space Center, which is the lead NASA center for human space exploration. The International Space Station - which is managed out of JSC - is a testbed for technologies and capabilities that will make the goals of pushing outward possible. Last Congress, I introduced the Leading Human Spaceflight Act which recognizes the importance of a permanent and continuous U.S. human presence in LEO and directs NASA to work with the private sector in developing commercial capabilities to meet our future needs there. My bill also authorizes NASA to operate the ISS until 2030 - or until a sustainable lower cost alternative is demonstrated. The Leading Human Spaceflight Act maintains our National capabilities to manage space operation and program integration, space suit development, and habitat integration as we return to the Moon and push towards Mars. I ask that the committee works with me as I work to advance this legislation again this Congress.

I am proud to have served as the Chairman of the Space Subcommittee last Congress and am honored to continue as the Ranking Member now. NASA has accomplished unbelievable things in the last 60 years, and I whole-heartedly believe that the next 60 will be even more impressive for the American Space Enterprise as a whole, to include NASA - I look forward to working with all of you on this Committee to ensure that we - here at SST - play an indispensable role in that.

I would be remiss if I didn't touch on my role with the Subcommittee on Environment. Regardless of party, environmental policy is of universal importance. I welcome these often-polarizing conversations, but I am certain that when we decide to work together we will accomplish significant achievements - like leading the world in weather prediction.

We have the privilege of having some incredibly unique topics under our jurisdiction. From cybersecurity to protecting our nations proprietary data, to artificial intelligence and hypersonics, to weather prediction and the human and scientific exploration of our galaxy - we work on some incredibly exciting things. I look forward to working together with both sides of the dais to ensure that we, SST, maintain jurisdiction on issues like space launch accident investigation, remote sensing, or anything else that others have publicly - or privately - made a claim on. Once more, I'm proud to serve with each of you and look forward to working together in the 116th Congress.

Thank you.