



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

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Statement by Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

An Overview of the NASA Budget for Fiscal Year 2019

Chairman Babin: The passage of the 2017 NASA Transition Authorization Act last year was clear evidence of the committee's bipartisan support of NASA. The FY19 budget request reflects the administration's adherence to the "continuity of purpose" described in the authorization act.

This committee's commitment to NASA's long-term goals are codified in law and the hearing record we've established over the years. Mars has been, and will remain, the first interplanetary destination for humanity. And along the way, NASA has been encouraged to carry out any mission necessary, including cis-lunar activities, to advance future interplanetary exploration.

There are many benefits to this strategy. The moon offers a proving ground closer to home for advancing the technologies necessary for deep space exploration. The opportunities for commercial and international participation could greatly enhance a lunar mission. And the more frequent operational cadence will better prepare astronauts, mission crews and the commercial partners for future missions.

We were very encouraged to see the president sign the Space Policy Directive 1 last year and the new Exploration Campaign at NASA in the budget proposal. But the details are still forthcoming and, as a friendly reminder, the Exploration Roadmap called for in the 2017 Authorization Act was due back to this committee on December 1. I hope the administration will see fit to send this important report soon so the committee has the best information to work with.

The president's budget proposal also includes some ideas about the future of the International Space Station. Currently, the ISS will operate until at least 2024, and the budget proposes to end direct government funding in 2025. The idea is that the commercial sector will step in to operate the ISS with NASA as a customer.

The ISS, managed and operated out of the Johnson Space Center, is a unique test-bed for deep space exploration and serves as a significant "services customer" to our developing NASA commercial partners. I remain open to new ideas relative to future operations but obviously we need a detailed, realistic and sustainable plan for any ISS transition in the future.

We will need buy-in from the industry and the workforce well in advance of simply turning off the lights on the ISS and walking away. Now I know that isn't what is on the table, but NASA will need to do a better job articulating the plan as we move forward.

As another friendly reminder, the ISS Transition plan called for in the 2017 Authorization Act was also due back to this committee on December 1.

Turning to NASA's science portfolio, this budget request continues to restore balance and support critical work across the entire science directorate.

The budget supports a robust science program. This includes a range of small, medium and large missions, such as the TESS exoplanet mission next month, the Mars Insight lander in May, the Parker Solar Probe over the summer, the James Webb Space Telescope in 2019, as well as the flagship Europa Clipper and Mars 2020 rover missions.

NASA has many exciting projects and missions across the agency. It is amazing to see the progress that's been accomplished just over the last year. Very soon, SLS, Orion, Dragon 2 and Starliner vehicles will take their first flights. NASA will begin construction of the Deep Space Gateway, the first permanent human outpost beyond low-Earth orbit. And with continued bipartisan congressional support, NASA will continue to make great strides in deep space exploration.

I thank Acting Administrator Lightfoot for his testimony and look forward to this discussion.

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