



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

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Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

H.R. 1159, the United States and Israel Space Cooperation Act

Chairman Babin: Good morning, I am glad you could join us for today's mark-up of H.R. 1159, the "United States and Israel Space Cooperation Act."

Cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space is special. Certainly, it is important to find common ground with our friends and allies in our profound appreciation for the wonderful and awe-inspiring mysteries of the cosmos.

However, in a time of turmoil and scarce resources, it is also vital that any common effort produce concrete accomplishments and returns for our citizens as well as those of our close allies.

This legislation succeeds on both accounts. It brings Israel and the United States closer together in the peaceful use and exploration of outer space. In doing so, this cooperation will benefit the researchers, scientists, and citizens of both our nations. The US has had a close relationship with the Israeli space program since its infancy, more than three decades ago. Our space cooperation with Israel blossomed and grew until NASA launched the first Israeli astronaut into space, Ilan Ramon.

Tragically, Ilan's first flight in 2003 was the final voyage of the Space Shuttle Columbia. That terrible accident was, in some ways, a symbol of the relationship between our two great nations. We are bound together in times of both triumph and sorrow. Our journey to the stars together has been, and will continue to be, a symbol of our voyage together as nations.

In 2015, more than 10 years after the Columbia accident, NASA and the Israeli Space Agency renewed their commitment to partnership, signing a 10-year agreement on peaceful cooperation in space.

That agreement elaborated a host of conditions to protect sensitive information that both nations possess. It also reaffirmed that all existing laws and regulations would remain in force.

This agreement, which will be further strengthened by the legislation under consideration today, will benefit both our nations.

Peaceful exploration and use of space offers all humanity a common, noble goal; extending our collective reach further into the heavens. Extending that reach and broadening our understanding of the universe is one of the most important and honorable challenges we can face together.

I believe that increasing cooperation between NASA and our allies is vital. It is my belief — and hope — that bringing our two space agencies closer together will make us more than the sum of our parts.

I support the legislation and recommend its swift passage.

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