



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

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Statement from Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

60 Years of NASA Leadership in Human Space Exploration: Past, Present, and Future

Chairman Babin: The 36th Congressional District of Texas is home to Johnson Space Center, a source of pride for all Texans. Representing my constituents and JSC has been one of the proudest and most exciting experiences during my congressional tenure. I am honored to have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Space. This role has shown me how vital NASA is to the nation.

Sixty years of outstanding achievements by NASA have served to lay the foundation for even more incredible feats over the next 60 years.

Every single one of these remarkable accomplishments would not have occurred had it not been for the amazing individuals who have made up the NASA team over the years. The unique capabilities and experience of the workforce at each of NASA's centers, three of which are represented here today, were critical in helping NASA accomplishing such audacious goals. To accomplish remarkable feats in the future, our NASA centers, workforce and industry must be healthy and vibrant.

One of the first bills signed into law this Congressional session was the 2017 NASA Transition Authorization Act, which directed NASA to provide a Human Exploration Roadmap. Although that report arrived later than originally planned, it is finally here.

The new National Space Exploration Campaign laid out in the report not only charts a bold course for American human space exploration in the years and decades to come, it also provides an opportunity for JSC to continue serving a central role in exploration—as the expertise in Houston is critical to taking our astronauts beyond low Earth orbit. As I said in my July 25th column in the Houston Chronicle, the next time any American sets foot on the Moon or Mars, I want to again ensure, the first word from the surface is “Houston.” To meet these new goals, we need to build upon and cultivate the invaluable and unique capabilities of each Center and utilize the irreplaceable workforce which is a competitive asset for our nation.

Following the passage of the 2017 NASA Authorization, I introduced H.R. 5503, the 2018 NASA Authorization Act. This bill reaffirms JSC's leadership role in human spaceflight operations and consolidates NASA's systems and integration work on space suits—

providing greater efficiencies, preserving the industrial base, and keeping JSC's engineering and space operations capabilities "front and center".

Just this morning, I introduced the Leading Human Spaceflight Act to provide further Congressional direction to NASA. This bill reaffirms Johnson Space Center's leadership role as the home of American human spaceflight. This legislation also recognizes that based on their historical role and extensive expertise and capabilities, Johnson Space Center is the logical center to serve a lead role in program management, systems engineering, program integration, and operations for NASA's human space exploration program—particularly those outlined in the Human Space Exploration Campaign.

I've said it before—the International Space Station (ISS) is the crown jewel of America's human spaceflight program. Leadership in LEO returns tremendous economic benefits of space exploration to Earth. My bill promotes policy that will lead to a permanent and continuous US human presence in LEO and authorizes NASA to operate the ISS until 2030, or until we have demonstrated and sustainable lower cost alternative. At the same time, NASA is directed to start work with the private sector in developing the commercial capabilities to meet America's future needs in low—Earth orbit.

While I have talked at length about JSC this afternoon—space exploration is a team effort and I am very proud of the work done at all of our NASA centers. WE MUST ENSURE that we learn from the past to prevent the detrimental gaps in prior transitions and protect our most important asset—the people—the irreplaceable workforce that have brought us this far and will take us into the next 60 years of space exploration.

I thank the witnesses for joining us here today and look forward to their testimony.

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