



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

For Immediate Release
October 9, 2015

Media Contact: Laura Crist
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)
Deep Space Exploration: Examining the Impact of the President's Budget

Chairman Babin: Last week was an amazing time for the space community. A major Hollywood film about the exploration of Mars debuted within days of NASA announcing a significant scientific discovery – liquid water on Mars. The coincidence of these two events garnered the public's attention, and rightly so. Rarely does popular culture and science align in such a serendipitous fashion. The attention also prompted obvious questions from the public such as “how will discovering water on Mars impact future exploration,” “are we really going to Mars,” and “how and when are we going to get there?”

These are all questions that the general public may not have the answers to, but thankfully NASA does. Because of bipartisan direction and investments made by Congress, we are well on our way to Mars. We are building the most powerful rocket ever built, the Space Launch System, so we can launch large payloads to beyond Earth-orbit (BEO) with decreased risk to overall missions; we are building the Orion crew capsule so that our astronauts can travel farther into deep space than ever before; and we are upgrading our ground systems to support 21st century operations. NASA has already tested the RS-25 engines and five segment boosters that will power the SLS; they've already launched an uncrewed version of Orion; and the Kennedy Space Center is undergoing revolutionary upgrades.

But there is more that needs to be done if the United States plans on launching a mission to Mars. We need to build a habitat module, advanced in-space propulsion, and a lander and ascent vehicle to name a few components.

Fortunately, we don't have to develop all of these capabilities at once. We can develop them incrementally over time. There are also potential opportunities for international and commercial partnerships that could be leveraged as well.

The first step on the journey to Mars, however, begins with the development of SLS, Orion, and the related ground systems. Unfortunately, Congress's support has not been matched by the Administration. In 2010, the President signed the *NASA Authorization Act of 2010* into law, thereby directing NASA to develop the SLS and Orion systems. This piece of legislation was the product of a Democratically controlled House and Senate that passed with 185 Democrats and 119 Republicans - demonstrating overwhelming bipartisanship. These programs are critical for the journey to Mars, and yet since 2010, the Administration has attempted to cut their funding every year.

This year alone, the President's budget request contains a cut of \$343.5 million for SLS and a cut of \$104 million for Orion. All told, the President's budget has requested nearly half a billion dollars in cuts to these programs this fiscal year. This Committee's NASA Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017 fully rejects the proposed cuts, and both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have approved bills to do the same. Even though Congress consistently rejects the Administration's proposed cuts

year-after-year, the proposed cuts still have a negative impact on the programs. The annual budget uncertainty that the Administration perpetuates impairs NASA's ability to manage the program's efficiently on behalf of the taxpayer.

At the same time that the Administration has been strangling these programs, the NASA workforce has been diligently trying to keep the programs moving by setting up alternative cost and schedule commitments called Management Agreements.

The agreements are separate from the official commitments in the KDP-C. While it is promising that NASA is trying to make the best out of a poor situation, having multiple plans could potentially lead to confusion and inefficiencies. Fortunately, SLS and Orion have been successful in spite of the external challenges placed on the programs. This is largely thanks to the supremely professional workforce at NASA and the contractors. To all the hardworking men and women who are advancing the development of these programs, know that your work is appreciated. Your work on these programs will inspire the next generation of explorers, maintain U.S. leadership globally, and chart new courses for humanity. Thank you for all that you do. You are the best this nation has to offer.

My hope is that folks across the Administration will reverse course and begin to support the SLS and Orion programs, and the workforce that makes them possible, with the funding necessary to continue their success. SLS and Orion are crucial for deep space exploration, and the first steps to Mars.

We have two steely-eyed missile men before us today who were directly involved in the management of the human exploration program while at NASA. I look forward to hearing about how we can all ensure the success of our nation's human exploration program.

###