



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

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
Next Steps to Mars: Deep Space Habitats

Chairman Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to our witnesses for being here today. Today's hearing covers a critical aspect of our nation's future journey to Mars—how our astronauts will live and work during their journey.

It's nice that best-selling author Andy Weir has agreed to join us today. His book, *The Martian*, along with the movie by the same name ignited the world's imagination. It brought to life an adventure that we can envision in the not-too-distant future: journeys to Mars with heroic astronauts putting themselves to the test of overcoming dangers with ingenuity and courage.

I wrote an op-ed with our colleague, Ed Perlmutter, two months ago that I would like to submit for the record.

In this article, we discuss the persistence of purpose and careful planning that is needed to turn such a mission—the first human space flight to another planet in our solar system—into reality.

This is not merely a science fiction movie starring Matt Damon. This is a goal within America's reach. NASA and American space companies are building the critical components for such a journey—the Orion crew vehicle and Space Launch System.

The popularity of *The Martian* as a novel and a film has shown that the American public is very interested in making this vision a reality. That is why NASA should not stray from its primary goal of exploration.

Exploration programs at NASA, both robotic and human, need to be adequately funded. Unfortunately, the Obama administration, year after year, woefully under budgets the very programs that will get us to Mars.

At the same time, the administration continues to push plans for an unjustified Asteroid Retrieval Mission. The Asteroid Retrieval Mission is a distraction without any connection to a larger roadmap to explore our solar system and is without support from the scientific community or NASA's own advisory committees. The Government Accountability Office recently estimated that the total cost for the Asteroid Retrieval Mission would be \$1.72 billion.

These funds would be better spent on space exploration with a connection to future missions to Mars, like deep space habitats and propulsion technologies.

America leads the world in space exploration but that is a leadership role we cannot take for granted. It has been over 40 years since astronaut Gene Cernan became the last man to walk on the moon. It is time to press forward. It is time to take longer strides. It is time to aim for Mars. Thank you.

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