

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



For Immediate Release
December 10, 2014

Media Contact: Laura Crist
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

An Update on the Space Launch System and Orion: Monitoring the Development of the Nation's Deep Space Exploration Capabilities

Chairman Smith: First I want to congratulate Bill Gerstenmaier and those at NASA, Lockheed Martin, and United Launch Alliance on a spectacular flight test last week of the Orion crew vehicle. I know a lot of hard work went into making that test flight happen.

At a fundamental level, space exploration—the mission of NASA—is about inspiration. This inspiration fuels our desire to push the boundaries of what is possible and to reach beyond our own pale blue dot. The successful Orion launch last week is one step in a long journey.

The purpose of today's hearing is simple: We wish to send a loud and clear message that space exploration is NASA's number one priority, and last week's test flight demonstrated many firsts. We are also here to ensure the next steps in this long journey are on track and will be just as successful.

There is bipartisan support within Congress that NASA stay on track with the Orion crew vehicle and Space Launch System, including the omnibus appropriations bill that we plan to vote on tomorrow. The Orion and SLS are essential elements for astronauts to eventually travel beyond low Earth orbit.

The omnibus appropriations bill made public last night is the latest example of Congressional support for these programs. Funded well above the President's Budget Request, the SLS and Orion are receiving the resources they need to ensure their success.

Fortune favors the bold. Last week's test flight was necessary to answer the naysayers and critics who claim that America's best days on the frontier of space are behind us. Last week's mission answered those critics.

The Apollo program demonstrated that we could reach the moon. And Orion and SLS will ensure that America continues a sustained series of missions as a spacefaring nation for decades to come.

The technologies that are developed for these programs exemplify our greatest breakthroughs and demonstrate American ingenuity. We must continue to push forward.

Great nations do great things. Everyone in today's hearing wants to ensure that the first flag flying on the surface of Mars is planted by an American astronaut.

And they will have arrived there onboard an Orion crew vehicle, propelled by the Space Launch System.

Let's work together to make that happen.

###