



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

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Deep Space Exploration: Examining the Impact of the President's Budget

Chairman Smith: 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 planet.

The American people are fascinated with space exploration. Just last week, the discovery that water sometimes flows on Mars' surface made headlines across the world. And the latest space film, *The Martian*, has sparked questions about when NASA will send astronauts to Mars.

Today's hearing seeks to answer those questions and examine the effect of the president's budget on our exploration programs.

In its Fiscal Year 2016 budget proposal, the Obama administration proposed a cut of over \$440 million from the programs that will take us to Mars: the Space Launch System (SLS) and Orion crew vehicle. This isn't new; the president has tried to cut SLS and Orion every year since he took office.

But there should be no misunderstanding: there is bipartisan support within Congress for SLS and the Orion crew vehicle. This Committee restored the proposed cuts in our Authorization bill. And the House and the Senate Appropriations Committees restored these funds and supported SLS and Orion at the levels necessary to keep their development on track.

Yet the administration continues to try to strangle these programs.

NASA recently announced that the first crewed mission for SLS and Orion was delayed by two years because the administration would not allow NASA to budget for the programs.

The administration regularly cuts SLS and Orion and Congress continues to restore its cuts. The budget instability caused by the administration makes it hard for NASA to plan and execute these critical programs.

The fact that NASA can still maintain these earlier dates in the face of administration opposition is a testament to the ingenuity, resolve, and professionalism of the NASA workforce.

The Obama administration cannot continue to claim that it prioritizes Mars exploration if it refuses to prioritize and support the programs that will get us there.

The SLS and Orion programs represent what is most impressive about the American spirit – our desire to explore. The technologies that are developed for these programs exemplify our greatest breakthroughs and demonstrate American ingenuity.

The Apollo program fifty years ago demonstrated that we could reach the moon. Orion and SLS will take us beyond that and rekindle the American spirit of discovery and advance humanity farther in space than ever before.

Congress will continue to ensure that these national priorities receive the funding they need to stay on schedule and on budget.

Great nations do great things. And fortune favors the bold. The next several years will determine whether American astronauts will be the first to plant a flag on Mars. We want them to have arrived there onboard an Orion crew vehicle, propelled by the Space Launch System.

Mr. Chairman, I also just want to comment on the recent handout that we have all seen by the administration called "NASA's Journey to Mars." Regrettably, however, this proposal contains no budget; it contains no schedule, no deadlines. It's just some real pretty photographs and some nice words. That is not going to do it. That is not going to get us to Mars. This sounds good, but it is actually a journey to nowhere until we have that budget and we have the schedule and we have the deadlines. And I hope the administration will change its posture and decide in the future that it is actually going to support SLS and Orion and keep them on schedule because their proposals to cut SLS and Orion every single year is not helping us achieve the great goals that most Americans want to achieve in space.