



# U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

## Opening Statement

**Chair Kendra Horn (D-OK)**

Full Committee Hearing:  
*A Review of the NASA Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request*  
April 2, 2019

Good morning and thank you, Chairwoman Johnson, for holding this hearing to review NASA's Fiscal Year 2020 budget request, and welcome, Administrator Bridenstine.

I want to start by expressing my sincere appreciation for the talent and dedication of the NASA workforce, our international partners, and the academic and commercial communities that make our space program the envy of the world. All of you are integral to the plans we discuss this morning.

I think all of us in this room share a passion for the mission of NASA and the exciting projects that NASA and its partners are undertaking. That includes the human exploration theme and programs that are part of the Fiscal Year 2020 NASA budget. But, I have to pause here and ask, what budget and programmatic proposal are we actually considering here this morning? Because, Madame Chair, I'm concerned about the radical shifts, changes, and instability being sprung upon Congress as the Administration seeks to advance its ambitious Moon program.

Let's take a moment to review the last three to four months.

First, the Administration shut down the Federal Government for a total of 35 days, the longest shutdown in history, disrupting NASA programs, employees' lives, and contractors work. While the full extent of the shutdown impacts is not yet known, many projects will experience delays and some level of cost increase due to the disruption.

Second, in a delayed release of the FY 2020 budget request due to the shutdown, the Administration proposed a more ambitious Moon program-- to send humans to the lunar surface by 2028 --- while also proposing to cut a half billion dollars from the agency's topline relative to the FY 2019 enacted appropriation.

Third, just two weeks AFTER the Administration released its FY 2020 request for NASA, the Vice President announced that "it is the stated policy of this administration and the United States of America to return American astronauts to the Moon within the next five years." This is a full 4 years earlier than the ambitious date included in the FY 2020 Budget Proposal.

Fourth, last Friday, again just weeks AFTER releasing the FY 2020 Request, the Committee received notice of NASA's request for a major reorganization of NASA's technology and exploration activities that NASA is proposing through a "reprogramming request" to the Committee on Appropriations.

This request would create a new Moon to Mars Mission Directorate that would subsume the space technology program into a Directorate focused on large exploration development programs like the Gateway. NASA's request proposes other major organizational changes that, if approved, would bypass this Committee's authorizing role in considering such drastic reorganizational changes.

Finally, a full year and a half AFTER its Congressionally-directed due date, the Committee received the report directed in Section 435 of the NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017. According to the report, it's clear that getting to the surface of Mars in the 2030s is impossible under this Administration's current approach to exploration. Moreover, the report acknowledges what many on this Committee have been surmising during past hearings—namely, that there is no actual Plan for a human Mars mission.

It states that NASA's Exploration Campaign Report, "is a high-level strategy...is mainly a plan for a plan...and may not ultimately play a substantive role in efforts to place humans in Mars orbit by 2033. Further specificity of NASA's long-term plans in a public document would help Congress and other public policy officials make informed decisions over the coming decades."

So, I return to my earlier question, exactly what proposal are we considering today?

We have a FY 2020 budget proposal that requests funds for a sustainable program to land humans to the surface of the Moon by 2028 and to establish a permanent presence there. We have a statement by the Vice President directing NASA to accelerate that date by 4 years, to 2024. And, as of just last Friday, we have a substantive analysis that raises numerous questions about NASA's Exploration Campaign and the extent to which the Moon program will get us to Mars.

These issues are not partisan. We have learned over several Congresses and Administrations that attempting to implement major programs through fits and starts creates confusion and often delays progress.

Changes in direction also present challenges for the Committee's work toward providing effective guidance and policy through the reauthorization process.

I hope the Administrator's testimony will provide some clarity, because the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee will need to take a hard look at these issues as we work toward NASA reauthorization.

Thank you Madame Chair, and I yield back the balance of my time.