



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

## Opening Statement

**Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)**

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

Good morning, and welcome Administrator Bridenstine.

We have a lot to cover at today's hearing, so I will come right to the point. You have stated that NASA's fiscal year 2020 budget request is a good one, apparently in part because the President didn't cut your budget as much as he is proposing to cut the rest of America's federal R&D investments, including misguided and harmful cuts to DOE's and NSF's research budgets.

I am not persuaded. In fact, I find both this NASA budget request and your written testimony for today's hearing to be disappointing and inadequate.

The President's budget request for FY 2020 proposes the same ill-advised cuts to important NASA science and education initiatives that it did last year—cuts which Congress has already considered and rejected in the FY 2019 appropriations act. Eliminating NASA's key STEM activities—MUREP, Space Grant, and EPSCoR, the highest ranked astrophysics decadal priority—WFIRST, and two critical Earth Science missions—PACE and CLARREO, made no sense last year and they make no sense this year. I have little doubt that those cuts will be rejected by Congress once again.

Yet it is in the area of human space flight, which accounts for half of NASA's budget, that I find your written testimony most troubling and non-responsive. Relying on that testimony, I would have no idea that Vice President Pence, presumably speaking for the President, last week directed NASA to undertake a crash program to put astronauts on the Moon within five years "by any means necessary", to quote the Vice President.

And what is the justification for this crash program? To quote the Vice President again, it's because "we're in a space race today, just as we were in the 1960s, and the stakes are even higher". Moreover, according to the Vice President, the Chinese have "revealed their ambition to seize the lunar strategic high ground", whatever that means. The simple truth is that we are not in a space race to get to the Moon. We won that race a half-century ago, as this year's commemoration of Apollo 11 makes clear. And using outdated Cold War rhetoric about an adversary seizing the lunar strategic high ground only begs the question of why if that is the Vice President's fear, the Department of Defense with its more than \$700 billion budget request, doesn't seem to share that fear and isn't tasked with preventing it from coming to pass.

However, rhetoric isn't the same as a credible plan, and this Committee needs to see if there is any substance to this crash program. The Vice President's directive to NASA came just two weeks after the Trump Administration submitted its NASA budget request to Congress. Moreover, it is to be completed within the same five-year budget horizon that is contained in the President's FY 2020 budget request.

Given the absence of an urgent crisis, it would be the height of irresponsibility for the Vice President of the United States to direct NASA to land astronauts on the Moon within the next five years without knowing what it will cost, how achievable the schedule is, and how it will impact NASA's other programs. I expect you, Mr. Administrator, to provide the same information to this Committee today as I assume you provided to the White House on each of those questions in advance of the Vice President's speech.

This Committee needs to know how much money will be needed in each of the next five years to carry out the crash program. We need to know how much—if any—money the President proposes to add to NASA's budget over each of the next five years and the extent to which NASA's other programs will be cannibalized or cut to fund this initiative. We need to know if our international partners will be part of it or simply frozen out, as some of the rhetoric would seem to suggest. We need to know if the International Space Station will have to be shut down within the next few years to free up funding for the lunar crash program. In short, we need specifics, not rhetoric. Because rhetoric that is not backed by a concrete plan and believable cost estimates is just hot air. And hot air may be helpful in ballooning, but it won't get us to the Moon or Mars.

Administrator Bridenstine, I like many of my colleagues on this Committee strongly support NASA, and we want our nation to achieve challenging exploration goals like landing humans on Mars. If the Moon is a useful and necessary waypoint on the way to Mars, then I believe Congress will support a sustainable exploration program that includes the Moon. But NASA has to date provided no meaningful roadmap to Mars, despite congressional direction to do so.

And if you are not able to provide us with credible specifics at today's hearing, I think a great disservice is being done to the hardworking and dedicated men and women at NASA. They need programs and funding plans that are sustainable and inspiring, not a constantly shifting set of directives. I can assure you that this Committee will do its part to ensure that NASA can continue to be the inspiring leader in space exploration, science and technology, and aeronautics that it has been for the past six decades, and this hearing is just the first step.

Thank you, and I now yield to my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Lucas.