

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
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Statement of Congressman Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.)
Markup of *The NASA Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017* (H.R. 2039)

Congressman Steven Palazzo: H.R. 2039, the NASA Authorization for 2016 and 2017, provides policy provisions that passed the House of Representatives earlier this year by unanimous consent, but await action by the Senate. This same bill also passed the House last year by a vote of 401-2. This authorization preserves the bipartisan agreement on policy provisions and updates it to authorize funding levels for FY16 and FY17.

Unlike the president's budget request, this bill fully complies with the Budget Control Act (BCA) and provides for increased authorizations in the event that the BCA is repealed, replaced, or amended; or if off-sets are identified within existing discretionary spending accounts to allow for increases. FY16 and FY17 authorizations are aspirational levels that match the president's budget request top-line for NASA and readjust subaccount levels to align with national priorities and return balance to the entire agency. FY17 is a 1.5 percent increase for inflation in line with the president's request. If BCA relief or off-sets are not found, then authorizations are limited to constrained levels.

This bill creates a balanced portfolio between Exploration and Science - \$4.95 billion each. The bill also returns balance to the Science Mission Directorate by funding \$1.45 billion for Earth Science, \$1.5 billion for Planetary Science, and \$2 billion total for Astrophysics, the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST), and Heliophysics.

The bill fully funds the Space Launch System (SLS) and Orion crew vehicle (Orion) under both the aspirational and constrained authorization levels, and accelerates the development of SLS and Orion in FY17 under the aspirational level. This will give NASA time to plan for the accelerated development since we are just six months away from the beginning of the 2016 fiscal year. Similarly, the bill fully funds the Commercial Crew program under the aspirational level and increases funding under the constrained level by \$331 million. Because of the protest to the contract award last fall, NASA may have to delay milestones for the program, so this level of funding will likely be sufficient to ensure that we can once again launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil by 2017.

I know many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle don't think that the Budget Control Act and sequestration restricts authorization Committees. By this logic no authorizing committee would need to adhere to the Budget Control Act. Thus, authorizers would simply provide an uncapped, unfunded wish list to appropriators.

Authorizing funding above what can be appropriated is a damaging act. It sets NASA up for failure by presenting the space agency with unfunded mandates. Many NASA advisory groups and blue ribbon

commissions have noted that NASA is being asked to do too much with too little. Authorizing Committees should not contribute to this problem.

This bill keeps the bipartisan agreement with the minority on policy provisions. This bill is also fiscally responsible. The bill balances exploration and science, and restores true balance to the science division. Unlike the president's budget request, it provides for increased funding for NASA while ensuring those increases are paid for.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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