



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

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## **Statement from Brian Babin (R-Texas)**

Markup of the *NASA Authorization Act of 2018* (H.R. 5503)

**Chairman Babin:** It is an honor and a privilege to bring the NASA 2018 Authorization to this committee today.

Just over a year ago, the 2017 NASA Transition Authorization Act was signed into law, representing a clear bipartisan commitment to our nation's space program. That law established and this bill continues to honor three very important provisions: continuity of purpose, clear long-term goals for exploration and a balanced space science portfolio. NASA must stay the course on future exploration while preserving our advancements in low-Earth orbit.

The first urgent question is the future of the International Space Station (ISS). The ISS is the jewel in the crown of America's space program. As a representative of the hard working men and women of Johnson Space Center, I know how important the ISS is to our nation.

The administration, in response to congressional direction in 2017, has provided a proposal for ISS transition. It is too early to say how or when the transition will occur but the recent report outlines a credible course of action and early initial steps. I support the administration in carrying out first steps. I support the administration carrying out these first steps but it is critically important that we see a more detailed plan before steps are taken to sunset ISS.

The bill directs NASA to continue the operation of the ISS for such time as Congress authorizes. It prevents the administration from pursuing any international agreements that would tie the hands of a future Congress. The administrator must report directly to this committee every three months on the status of the ISS transition. In other words, the ISS must be transitioned, but not before we, as a nation, are ready to do so.

This bill provides funding for the SLS and Orion programs at omnibus levels, signaling that we will support the programs as they move towards realization. It also explicitly authorizes and directs development of a second mobile launch platform to increase safety, reduce delays and provide flexibility for exploration.

These and other measures provide a strong foundation, fostering a whole-of-government, indeed, whole-of-nation approach to space. As Vice President Pence said yesterday: "Space exploration is essential to our national security, it's essential to our nation's prosperity, and it is essential to the very character of America."

I have and continue to support the idea of a balanced space program. We must also understand that "balanced" means not only balanced within NASA but also balanced across government.

Within the proposed authorization levels, NASA's science portfolio is 30 percent of NASA's budget. This is consistent with both the omnibus and the president's budget request.

In Planetary Science, this bill increases spending for the kind of science that only NASA can do and for which NASA is the first, and perhaps only, customer, such as Mars Sample Return and missions to Europa.

In a responsible way, Earth science is correspondingly reduced. The administration is directed to provide NASA reimbursement for work undertaken for the benefit of other agencies, such as the development of particular Earth science systems. This will allow NASA to continue working on missions like Landsat without undermining its exploration mission.

NASA fills an essential and irreplaceable role for our country. It is the only agency to send humans to the surface of another celestial body, to send spacecraft to every planet in the solar system and to send probes to interstellar space.

I thank Chairman Smith for his leadership and guidance in reaffirming our national commitment to the exploration and use of space.

I strongly recommend this bill and urge my colleagues to actively support it.

Before I yield back to the Chairman, without objection, I'd like to place the following letters and statements of support in the record, from a number of organizations including:

- Aerospace Industries Association
- American Society for Gravitational and Space Research
- Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy
- Astrobotic
- Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
- Boeing
- Commercial Spaceflight Federation
- Made in Space

- Moon Express
- Nanoracks
- National Space Grant Alliance
- Texas A&M University System
- Vector Space Systems
- Virginia Commercial Spaceflight Authority
- Space Florida

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