



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

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Statement from Bill Posey (R-Fla.)
Full Committee Markup

Rep. Posey: A GAO report issued last year recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration examine its current regulatory framework for space support vehicles and suggest legislative or regulatory changes, as applicable.

The Commercial Space Support Vehicle Act was largely developed with input from a Department of Transportation report on approaches for streamlining the licensing and permitting process of hybrid launch vehicles to enable non-launch flight operations.

This bill amends Title 51 by adding two new definitions: one for “space support flight” and one for “space support vehicle” into the list of definitions for vehicles licensed under this chapter, so that we can create streamlined regulations for hybrid launch vehicles to operate.

The bill also amends Title 51 to allow the secretary of transportation to provide licenses for hybrid launch vehicles to conduct space support flights.

Hybrid launch vehicles are vehicles that have some of the characteristics of aircraft and some of the characteristics of launch vehicles.

NASA has utilized them to conduct parabolic experiments for years.

Companies would like to utilize space support vehicles to train crews and spaceflight participants by exposing them to the physiological effects encountered in spaceflight or conduct research in reduced gravity environments.

The Department of Transportation report concluded that the “option of having a single statutory regime and regulatory office oversee a demonstrated commercial space program throughout its operational lifecycle would allow consistent application of regulatory philosophy and safety oversight and be more efficient and cost effective for the launch operator as well as the licensing agency.”

The report further concluded that “for an evolving industry, a regulatory environment that can adjust to accommodate changes would allow for more flexible and more responsive oversight.”

The Commercial Space Support Vehicle Act provides the appropriate regulatory approach – by authorizing the secretary of transportation to develop the regulations by March 1, 2019, allowing licensed space support flights.

I would like to ask unanimous consent to include in the record a March 21 letter of support from Virgin Galactic for H.R. 5346, the Commercial Space Support Vehicle Act.

As mentioned by Chairman Smith, the intent of the timing is to include the development of regulations in the regulatory reform process that the vice president and National Space Council tasked the Federal Aviation Administration to complete by that date.

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