

## Highlights of H.R. \_\_\_\_\_, the NASA Authorization Act of 2015

**This bill authorizes programs and projects at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). Authorized NASA funding is consistent with the funding appropriated for NASA in the Consolidated and Further Appropriations Act, 2015 (P.L. 113-235)-- \$18,010,200,000. NASA continues to be the world's premier space organization. This bill seeks to maintain sustainability of purpose and budget for NASA programs, continuing the congressional direction provided in previous Authorizations from 2005, 2008, and 2010.**

**Human Spaceflight:** Building on the themes of previous authorizations, this bill reaffirms Congress's commitment to space exploration, both human and robotic. This legislation makes clear that a human mission to Mars is the goal for NASA's human spaceflight program and requires the development of a roadmap to achieve that goal, as well as biennial updates. In the near-term, the primary tasks for NASA human spaceflight include:

- Realizing the research potential of the International Space Station (ISS) with an Office of Science & Technology Policy-led strategic plan for all science agencies to conduct research on the Station. NASA will study the cost and feasibility of continuing its operational lifespan beyond 2020.
- Continued commitment to develop the Space Launch System and Orion Crew Vehicle and reiteration of Congressional direction that Orion serve as a backup system to support the ISS if necessary.
- Assist in building at least one Commercial Crew system (with NASA funds) to carry American astronauts on American rockets safely, reliably, and affordably to and from the ISS so that we are no longer reliant on Russia for crew access.

**Science Programs:** Relying on guidance of the National Academy of Science (NAS) Decadal Surveys, this bill emphasizes the importance of maintaining a steady cadence of science missions, including a Europa mission with a goal of launching by 2021. It directs NASA and the NAS to provide Congress with a report assessing the long-term goals of NASA's Mars Exploration Program, which includes the Mars 2020 rover. To reflect the increase in the number of newly discovered planets outside our solar system, the legislation also directs NASA and the NAS to provide an exoplanet exploration strategy. This bill stresses the importance of completing and expanding the Congressionally mandated near-Earth object survey to detect, track, catalogue, and characterize near-Earth objects 140 meters in diameter or larger. When additional Earth science responsibilities are transferred from other agencies to NASA, the legislation seeks to ensure that NASA will be reimbursed for the cost of new responsibilities. The bill also:

- Maintains funding to support a launch date goal of the James Webb Space Telescope by 2018.
- Continues survey for potentially-hazardous Earth-crossing objects.
- Continues exciting search for planets around other stars and life on other worlds.

**Aeronautics:** Authorizes a robust aeronautics research program, including efforts to safely integrate unmanned aerial systems into the national airspace, development of NextGen technology for future air traffic management, and research on aviation safety.

**Infrastructure:** Directs NASA to develop a plan to better position the agency to have the facilities and infrastructure necessary to meet future requirements including those set forth in the human exploration roadmap. Provides transparency provisions to ensure NASA's property and facilities are managed appropriately.

**Education:** Requires that NASA educational and outreach activities continue to support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics curriculum and inspire the next generation of explorers.

**Oversight:** The bill provides greater public accountability and transparency, requires NASA to enforce more cost estimating discipline for its programs, strengthens the NASA Advisory Council, and provides for additional tools to protect against waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.