

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
The Commercial Crew Program: Challenges and Opportunities

Chairman Smith: Thank you Chairman Palazzo for holding this hearing. And I thank the witnesses for being here to share their expertise.

America has always been a nation of innovators and explorers. We continue to remain on the forefront of new discoveries and technologies. Our history is filled with examples of entrepreneurs who pushed the boundaries of the possible.

The Commercial Crew Program offers a new way to develop human-rated systems for government access to space with the goal, of course, of ending our dependence on Russia. Building on the Commercial Cargo Program could be an important change from traditional programs, but only if it is done correctly.

Today the subcommittee will examine the progress made in the Commercial Crew program. This Committee is dedicated to ensuring the government has safe, reliable, and affordable access to low-Earth orbit.

The U.S. currently pays Russia \$70 million a seat for access to the International Space Station. It should be a top priority to launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil as soon as is safely possible.

American astronauts personify our nation's pioneering spirit. They represent our leadership as explorers and agents of discovery. A great deal of trust has been placed in the commercial crew partners – Boeing and SpaceX - that are partnering with NASA to take our astronauts into space. This is an extraordinary responsibility for these companies. It is one that cannot be taken lightly.

It is absolutely imperative that we understand the gravity of what it means to carry our astronauts into space. This committee will continue to monitor whether the Commercial Crew Program will ensure safety while also respecting cost and schedule constraints.

We can only do this if NASA is open and transparent about the program. The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel's recent report highlights issues with NASA's level of transparency.

This Committee has encountered similar issues as well. For the sake of all who are working to make this program a success, I hope this will change going forward.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about their progress on these systems and their ongoing relationship with NASA. Their insights into the program are invaluable to us.

The commercial space industry offers improvements to the quality of life for every person on the planet. The discoveries and applications that have come from space technology are numerous.

Since the dawn of the Space Age, contractors and the private sector have played a central role in making our nation's aspirations a reality.

The commercial space industry will ensure that America remains a world leader in space exploration.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

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