

**Opening Statement of Chairman Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.)**

Hearing on Exploring Our Solar System: The ASTEROIDS Act as a Key Step

**Chairman Palazzo:** Good morning. I would like to thank our witnesses for being here today to testify about future scientific exploration of our solar system and the recently introduced ASTEROIDS Act.

Planetary science has long inspired us to imagine what it would be like to visit another planet in our solar system. It has shown us that there are methane lakes on Saturn's moon Titan, icy plumes on Jupiter's moon Enceladus, and that humans can maintain a robotic presence on Mars.

However, over the last few years the Administration has consistently cut NASA's Planetary Science Division budget. Meanwhile, NASA's Earth Science program has grown by more than 40%. There are 13 agencies throughout the federal government that currently fund over \$2.5 billion in climate science research, but only one agency does space exploration and space science.

Congress has long been a supporter of planetary science, particularly as it pertains to asteroids. After the air burst over Chelyabinsk (Russia) that caused tens of millions of dollars in damage and injured nearly 1,500 people, this committee held two hearings on NASA's near Earth asteroid tracking programs and its efforts to fulfill the requirements of the George E. Brown Near-Earth Object Survey Act.

Support for the detection and characterization of asteroids is not to be confused with the President's current proposed Asteroid Redirect Mission or ARM. It is no secret that this committee has expressed significant skepticism with regards to ARM. NASA's own experts have been critical the plan. NASA's own Small Bodies Assessment Group recently said "its benefits for advancing the knowledge of asteroids and furthering planetary defense strategies are limited and not compelling." Additionally, the NASA Advisory Council has warned that "the ARM mission as currently defined may pose an unacceptable cost and technical risk."

This is not the type of review you want to hear from the experts that NASA has chartered to provide advice. While I am indeed interested in the opportunities offered by near-Earth objects, I continue to be concerned that the Administration is not heeding the warnings of these experts for the mission that it has designed.

Today we will also be discussing the bipartisan efforts of two members of this committee to offer a legal framework for the private sector to utilize celestial resources. The “American Space Technology for Exploring Resource Opportunities In Deep Space Act” or ASTEROIDS Act, is a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressman Posey and Congressman Kilmer. The two of them have worked very hard to put this legislation together and I am interested to hear what our witnesses have to say about the potential benefits offered by space resource utilization.

It is my sincere hope that the Administration will stop spending time on poorly designed and executed missions such as ARM and look to the private sector and scientists for input on the best way to maximize our limited resources.

At this time, I yield my remaining time to Mr. Posey from Florida.

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