Chairman Jerry Moran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Hearing to Review the FY2020 Budget Request for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

May 1, 2019

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon, I call this hearing to order.

Welcome to today's Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee hearing on the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Fiscal Year 2020 budget request.

Our witness today is NASA Administrator James Bridenstine. Welcome, Administrator. Thank you for being here today to testify regarding NASA's Fiscal Year 2020 budget request.

The Administration has initially proposed a funding level of $21 billion for NASA in its 2020 request, covering activities on Earth, in our solar system, and across far distant galaxies of the universe.

Since then, it has been an interesting few months.

Within days of the submission of the proposal, you announced efforts to explore alternatives to current plans to fly around the Moon, which have since been determined by NASA as unworkable.

Simultaneously, NASA has been working on a 45-day study to bring forward the timeline for the initial launch of the Space Launch System and the Orion crew vehicle. I hope that we will be able to discuss results of that study today.

Finally, the Vice President challenged NASA just a few weeks ago to land American astronauts on the Moon by 2024, rather than the 2028 date that was initially proposed. NASA has been very busy because of this and I hope we can discuss some of the details today.

The Fiscal Year 2020 request includes significant changes to NASA's exploration agenda and strengthening the focus on the Moon as its next major step before paving the way for the human exploration of Mars.

NASA continues to develop vehicles that will take humans deeper into space with the Space Launch System and the Orion crew capsule, and now proposes beginning development of infrastructure that will enable humans to return to the lunar surface. This lunar exploration effort

with both human and robotic missions is exciting and will undoubtedly inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers.

It is an exciting time and the Committee wants to be supportive of these exploration goals, but the delayed timing of a finalized plan could pose its own challenges. While there is some uncertainty about the details for human exploration, I urge us to also keep in mind that the first 'A' in NASA stands for aeronautics. Administrator, this is something that you and I have discussed in great detail.

In my home state of Kansas, we are proud of our aviation history, which continues to thrive today. Kansas astronaut Nick Hague is currently stationed on board the International Space Station.

As we all know, Nick persevered through last October's launch that didn't go as planned and forced him to make an emergency landing. I'm proud to say that Nick strapped back in at his very next opportunity and successfully made it to the International Space Station in March. I would also like to congratulate Nick on completing the first spacewalk of his career.

Also, Wichita, Kansas, is celebrating over 100 years of history in aviation, and the quarter-million aircraft it has produced – more than any other city around the world.

I enjoyed hosting you last year in Wichita at the National Institute for Aviation Research to see the crucial and innovative role that this facility plays in aeronautics materials research.

Looking to the future, NASA's experimental aircraft and research efforts are helping integrate unmanned aircraft into the nation's airspace. These efforts hold the potential to further grow our economy. NASA is synonymous with "innovation" and "inspiration," and is one of the most-recognized federal agencies because of its many great achievements and its bold vision.

Administrator Bridenstine, we both agree on the important role NASA plays in inspiring students – the engineers, mathematicians, scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

I know I've shared this previously, but during your visit to Wichita last year, we inspired a young high school student at our STEM event to act on his childhood dream of landing on Mars. That inspiration led to him applying for an internship with NASA this summer.

Stories like this highlight the importance of making certain we have great minds and ambitious young leaders to help us achieve our goals in space far into the future – and NASA's STEM education, internship and career pipelines help get them there.

Unfortunately, this budget again sidelines the very programs at NASA that benefit involvement in STEM education from students in kindergarten to graduate students, and everything in-between.

NASA education activities such as Space Grant, EPSCoR, and the Minority University Research Program have broad bipartisan support, particularly on this Committee. Rather than eliminating these opportunities, NASA should find more ways to encourage our future leaders.

This committee has long worked together with NASA to facilitate exciting discoveries, develop cutting edge technologies and explore the universe. I thank you for coming today, Administrator Bridenstine, and look forward to working with you to ensure NASA has the resources it needs to carry out its important mission and responsibilities.

I now would like to recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen, for any opening remarks.

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