Congress of the United States

National Aeronautics and Space Administration Transition Authorization Act of 2017

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115TH UNITED STATES CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

An Act

To authorize the programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

Sec. 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS

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(a) SHORT TITLE.— This Act may be cited as the "National Aeronautics and Space Administration Transition Authorization Act of 2017".

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.— The table of contents of this Act is as follows:

Sec. 2. DEFINITIONS

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In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATION.—
The term "Administration" means the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—
The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—
The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means—
(A) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate; and
(B) the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives.
(4) CIS-LUNAR SPACE.—
The term “cis-lunar space” means the region of space from the Earth out to and including the region around the surface of the Moon.
(5) DEEP SPACE.—
The term “deep space” means the region of space beyond low-Earth orbit, to include cis-lunar space.
(6) GOVERNMENT ASTRONAUT.—
The term “government astronaut” has the meaning given the term in section 50902 of title 51, United States Code.
(7) ISS.—
The term “ISS” means the International Space Station.
(8) ISS MANAGEMENT ENTITY.—
The term “ISS management entity” means the organization with which the Administrator has a cooperative agreement under section 504(a) of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18354(a)).
(9) NASA.—
The term “NASA” means the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
(10) ORION.—
The term “Orion” means the multipurpose crew vehicle described under section 303 of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18323).
(11) SPACE LAUNCH SYSTEM.—

The term “Space Launch System” has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18302).

(12) UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ASTRONAUT.—The term “United States government astronaut” has the meaning given the term “government astronaut” in section 50902 of title 51, United States Code, except it does not include an individual who is an international partner astronaut.

TITLE I— AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS

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Sec. 101. FISCAL YEAR 2017.

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There are authorized to be appropriated to NASA for fiscal year 2017, $19,508,000,000, as follows:

(1) For Exploration, $4,330,000,000.
(2) For Space Operations, $5,023,000,000.
(3) For Science, $5,500,000,000.
(4) For Aeronautics, $640,000,000.
(5) For Space Technology, $686,000,000.
(6) For Education, $115,000,000.
(7) For Safety, Security, and Mission Services, $2,788,600,000.
(8) For Construction and Environmental Compliance and Restoration, $388,000,000.
(9) For Inspector General, $37,400,000.

TITLE II— SUSTAINING NATIONAL SPACE COMMITMENTS

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Sec 201. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON SUSTAINING NATIONAL SPACE COMMITMENTS

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It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) honoring current national space commitments and building upon investments in space across successive Administrations demonstrates clear continuity of purpose by the United States, in collaboration with its international, academic, and industry partners, to extend humanity’s reach into deep space, including cis-lunar space, the Moon, the surface and moons of Mars, and beyond;
(2) NASA leaders can best leverage investments in the United States space program by continuing to develop a balanced portfolio for space exploration and space science, including continued development of the Space Launch System, Orion, Commercial Crew Program, space and planetary science missions such as the James Webb Space Telescope, Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope, and Europa mission, and ongoing operations of the ISS and Commercial Resupply Services Program;
(3) a national, government-led space program that builds on current science and exploration programs, advances human knowledge and capabilities, and opens the frontier beyond Earth for ourselves, commercial enterprise, and science, and with our international partners, is of critical importance to our national destiny and to a future guided by United States values and freedoms;

(4) continuity of purpose and effective execution of core NASA programs are essential for efficient use of resources in pursuit of timely and tangible accomplishments;
(5) NASA could improve its efficiency and effectiveness by working with industry to streamline existing programs and requirements, procurement practices, institutional footprint, and bureaucracy while preserving effective program oversight, accountability, and safety;
(6) it is imperative that the United States maintain and enhance its leadership in space exploration and space science, and continue to expand freedom and economic opportunities in space for all Americans that are consistent with the Constitution of the United States; and
(7) NASA should be a multi-mission space agency, and should have a balanced and robust set of core missions in space science, space technology, aeronautics, human space flight and exploration, and education.

Sec. 202. FINDINGS

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Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Returns on the Nation's investments in science, technology, and exploration accrue over decades-long timeframes, and a disruption of such investments could prevent returns from being fully realized.
(2) Past challenges to the continuity of such investments, particularly threats regarding the cancellation of authorized programs with bipartisan and bicameral support, have disrupted completion of major space systems thereby—
    (A) impeding planning and pursuit of national objectives in space science and human space

exploration;

(B) placing such investments in space science and space exploration at risk; and

(C) degrading the aerospace industrial base.

(3) The National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-155; 119 Stat. 2895), National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-422; 122 Stat. 4779), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18301 et seq.) reflect a broad, bipartisan agreement on the path forward for NASA's core missions in science, space technology, aeronautics, human space flight and exploration, and education, that serves as the foundation for the policy updates by this Act.

(4) Sufficient investment and maximum utilization of the ISS and ISS National Laboratory with our international and industry partners is—

(A) consistent with the goals and objectives of the United States space program; and

(B) imperative to continuing United States global leadership in human space exploration, science, research, technology development, and education opportunities that contribute to development of the next generation of American scientists, engineers, and leaders, and to creating the opportunity for economic development of low-Earth orbit.

(5) NASA has made measurable progress in the development and testing of the Space Launch System and Orion exploration systems with the near-term objectives of the initial integrated test flight and launch in 2018, a human mission in 2021, and continued missions with an annual cadence in cis-lunar space and eventually to the surface of Mars.

(6) The Commercial Crew Program has made measurable progress toward reestablishing the

capability to launch United States government astronauts from United States soil into low-Earth orbit by the end of 2018.
(7) The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, in its 2015 Annual Report, urged continuity of purpose noting concerns over the potential for cost overruns and schedule slips that could accompany significant changes to core NASA programs.

TITLE III— MAXIMIZING UTILIZATION OF THE ISS AND LOW-EARTH ORBIT

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Sec. 301. OPERATION OF THE ISS

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(a) Sense Of Congress.—

It is the sense of Congress that—
(1) after 15 years of continuous human presence in low-Earth orbit, the ISS continues to overcome challenges and operate safely;
(2) the ISS is a unique testbed for future space exploration systems development, including long-duration space travel;
(3) the expansion of partnerships, scientific research, and commercial applications of the ISS is essential to ensuring the greatest return on investments made by the United States and its international space partners in the development, assembly, and operations of that unique facility;
(4) utilization of the ISS will sustain United States leadership and progress in human space exploration by —

(A) facilitating the commercialization and economic development of low-Earth orbit;
(B) serving as a testbed for technologies and a platform for scientific research and development; and
(C) serving as an orbital facility enabling research upon—
(i) the health, well-being, and performance of humans in space; and
(ii) the development of in-space systems enabling human space exploration beyond low-Earth orbit; and

(5) the ISS provides a platform for fundamental, microgravity, discovery-based space life and physical sciences research that is critical for enabling space exploration, protecting humans in space, increasing pathways for commercial space development that depend on advances in basic research, and contributes to advancing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics research.

(b) OBJECTIVES.—

The primary objectives of the ISS program shall be—
(1) to achieve the long term goal and objectives under section 202 of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18312); and
(2) to pursue a research program that advances knowledge and provides other benefits to the Nation.

(c) CONTINUATION OF THE ISS.— Section 501 of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C. 18351) is amended to read as follows: