

U.S. Senator John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.)

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Subcommittee on Space and Science**

February 9, 2022

TRANSCRIPT Opening Statement

HICKENLOOPER: The Subcommittee on Space and Science will come to order. This is our third meeting this Congress with this subcommittee. Today, we're going to examine NASA's management of key programs critical to mission success and NASA's partnerships with the commercial aerospace sector.

I'm confident this – today's discussion will be out of this world. Sorry.

NASA plays a key role in fulfilling the National Space Council's recent United States Space Priorities Framework such as maintaining a robust U.S. space enterprise and preserving the space environment for missions focused on exploration to the Moon and to Mars, not to mention combating climate change with earth science.

We'll have strong -- well, we need strong program management and establishment of clear goals, which are all fundamental to continue our nation's success in space. I'd like to express my appreciation for recommendations in the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel's latest report for NASA to designate an Artemis program manager with responsibility and accountability for all aspects of the Artemis mission. And to develop a 20-year strategic vision for future space exploration and operations and to establish an internal management board with NASA center directors to align the activities of various NASA centers with agency priorities.

I think we can say the Olympics notwithstanding, the world's eyes are once again upon the United States as we return to the Moon and explore the next frontier. We're excited that this mission will also land the first woman and the first person of color on the Moon.

While we prepare our return to the Moon, we must also plan for our long-term future in low Earth orbit. That includes, of course, moving beyond the International Space Station. Recent International Space Station, the recent International Space Station transition report describes NASA's plans to retire the world's longest running spacecraft.

Outlines -- within it, it outlines the cost from ongoing maintenance of the International Space Station for -- to replace aging parts, the cost of cargo transport for needed supplies on board, potential budget savings in transitioning to commercial stations.

The report also evaluates the benefits and potential risks with commercial stations in low Earth orbit and it discusses plans to deorbit the station into Earth's ocean. In previous subcommittee hearings, we have discussed the need for a bicameral NASA authorization bill. We'll discuss that again today. NASA hasn't been authorized by Congress since 2017. Authorization gives federal agencies clear Congressional guidance. And we look forward to working with my colleagues in the House of Representatives to send President Biden a NASA bill this Congress.

This hearing will provide the subcommittee important oversight on NASA's current and future plans. We look forward to identify how NASA and this committee can continue to collaborate on solutions to many of these pressing challenges.

Our subcommittee's oversight is not limited to exploration programs alone. NASA has a huge role in Earth science to fight climate change in the incentives and tactical expertise to address orbital debris crisis, what I call space trash.

I'd also like to quickly highlight just a few of the many Colorado space industry contributions to NASA's success, just so I can return safely to Colorado. Lockheed Martin selected to build the Mars Ascent Vehicle and return historic samples collected from Mars, Ball Aerospace Corporation built the Mirror System for James Webb Space Telescope and Advanced Space, small business in Colorado. But it's a big part of NASA's CAPSTONE mission launching space craft pathfinders for the Artemis program. We need to also recognize NASA's work with countless universities, small businesses and entrepreneurs across the nation.

It truly takes a large, talented team working together to succeed. I'd like to welcome today's witness panel. Mr. James Free, Associate Administrator for NASA's Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate.

Mr. James Reuter, Associate Administrator for NASA's Space Technology Mission Directorate.

Dr. Thomas Zurbuchen, Associate Administrator, NASA Science Mission Directorate.

Mr. William Russell, Director of Government Accountability Office for Contracting & National Security Acquisitions Team.

And Dr. Scott Pace, Director, Space Policy Institute at George Washington University, Former Executive Secretary of the National Space Council.