

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks on Signing the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Transition Authorization Act of 2017

March 21, 2017

The President. Okay, thank you very much. For almost six decades, NASA's work has inspired millions and millions of Americans to imagine distant worlds and a better future right here on Earth. I'm delighted to sign this bill—it's been a long time since a bill like this has been signed—reaffirming our national commitment to the core mission of NASA: human space exploration, space science, and technology.

With this legislation, we support NASA's scientists, engineers, astronauts, and their pursuit of discovery. We support jobs; it's about jobs also. This bill calls for ongoing medical monitoring and treatment of our heroic astronauts for health conditions that result from their service. It's a pretty tough job. I don't know, Ted, would you like to do it? I don't think I would. *[Laughter]* Marco, do you want to do it? Marco, I don't know. I'm not sure we want to do it.

Senator R. Edward "Ted" Cruz. You could send Congress to space. *[Laughter]*

The President. Hey! *[Laughter]* What a great idea. That could be—*[laughter]*.

This bill will make sure that NASA's most important and effective programs are sustained. It orders NASA to continue—and it does, it orders just that—to continue transitioning activities to the commercial sector where we have seen great progress. It's amazing what's going on; so many people and so many companies are so into exactly what NASA stands for. So the commercial and the private sector will get to use these facilities. And I hope they're going to be paying us a lot of money, because they're going to make great progress.

It continues support for the commercial crew program, which will carry American astronauts into space from American soil once again—been a long time. It supports NASA's deep space exploration, including the Space Launch System and the ORION spacecraft. It advances space science by maintaining a balanced set of mission and activities to explore our solar system and the entire universe. And it ensures that through NASA's astronauts and aeronautics research, the United States will remain a total leader in aviation.

Now, these astronauts are amazing—I've met some of them—they are very brave people, and their right at the forefront. So we salute them with this legislation. And we salute the ones that have lost their lives doing what they love to do.

America's space program has been a blessing to our people and to the entire world. Almost half a century ago, our brave astronauts first planted the American flag on the Moon. That was a big moment in our history. Now this Nation is ready to be the first in space once again. Today we're taking the initial steps toward a bold and bright new future for American spaceflight.

I am honored to sign this new bill. The folks behind me have been so involved in it. They love NASA. They love everything it stands for, and they love the people in their areas. You have a couple of areas that are going to be very benefit—very much benefited by this.

So I just want to thank all of the people standing behind me. They've done a great service for the country and for their communities. It's a lot of jobs, and these are great jobs. So thank you very much. And we'll sign this.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

The President. Okay. So we'll hold that up. A lot of pages. Look at the pages in there. That's a lot of—[*laughter*]. We don't want to let that slip.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration Acting Administrator Robert M. Lightfoot, Jr. Mr. President, thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Marco?

Rep. John A. Culbertson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Who else should get these, Mr. Vice President? Lamar?

Rep. Culbertson. Lamar Smith, right behind you.

The President. Okay, I have two left. Who else?

Sen. Cruz. And then, Bill Nelson played an important role.

Senator Marco A. Rubio. He's been to space. [*Laughter*]

Acting Administrator Lightfoot. Mr. President, on behalf of NASA, I would like to present you with this NASA astronaut flight jacket. Thank you very much for your support.

The President. Thank you very much. Does anybody have anything good to say? Ted, do you want to say something?

Sen. Cruz. Well, this is terrific: the first time in 7 years we've had a NASA authorization bill. Thank you, Mr. President, for signing it. This means a great deal to the President's—to the Nation's space exploration, it means a great deal to the State of Texas, and it continues America's leadership in space. So thank you for your leadership.

The President. Thank you, Teddy.

Marco, please?

Sen. Rubio. I just think I'm happy to see that Florida is going to continue to more than Texas is in NASA, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. It's going to be a good competition. Right, Kevin?

Mr. Vice President.

Vice President Michael R. Pence. Senator Nelson's perhaps, Mr. President.

The President. Okay, Senator. Oh, he's a Democrat. I wasn't going to let him speak. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Culbertson. It's a special man who loves NASA.

The President. He does love NASA.

Senator C. William Nelson. It puts us on the dual track. We have the commercial companies going to and from the International Space Station, and we have NASA going out and exploring the heavens. And we're going to Mars.

The President. Good. I love that. I love that.

Rep. Culbertson. Just as—Mr. President, if I may. Just as Americans remember that President Eisenhower was the father of the Interstate Highway System, with you bill signing

today and your vision and leadership, future generations will remember that President Donald Trump was the father of the interplanetary highway system.

The President. Well, that sounds exciting. [*Laughter*] First, we want to fix our highways. We're going to fix our highways. Yes.

Representative Brian Babin. Mr. President, as House subcommittee chair, I'd like to—and actually part of the author of the new TREAT Act for our astronauts, that started in a meeting with astronaut Scott Kelly after he got back from nearly a year in space. And I said, what can we do for you in the House of Representatives? He said, take care of us. Make sure we're hanging on to this data so that future astronauts will be treated right, and we'll know what to do and make the proper adjustments for folks when they're up there in the ISS and on beyond. So I want to thank everybody here. I thank these astronauts who have put their lives on the line.

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Mike?

Vice President Pence. I want to say—excuse me for a moment—on behalf of the President and all of us, I want to thank all these Members of Congress, these courageous astronauts for their work on this, but to assure you that, in very short order, the President will be taking action to relaunch the National Space Council. And he's asked me to chair that, as Vice Presidents have in the past. And we're going to be bringing together the best and brightest in NASA and also in the private sector.

We have elected a builder for President. And as he said, America once again has to start building and leading to the stars. So thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, Mike, thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Reps. Lamar S. Smith and Kevin O. McCarthy. Rep. Babin referred to NASA astronaut Cmdr. Scott J. Kelly. S. 442, approved March 21, was assigned Public Law No. 115–10.

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