

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Subcommittee Chairman Udall's Statement on the NASA Authorization Act**

(Washington, DC) – Today, **House Committee on Science and Technology's Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Chairman Mark Udall** introduced the "NASA Authorization Act of 2008" (H.R. 6023), a bill to reauthorize the programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for Fiscal Year 2009.

**Subcommittee Chairman Udall** made the following statement:

Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the "NASA Authorization Act of 2008", a bill to reauthorize the programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2009. I am pleased that Science and Technology Committee Chairman Bart Gordon, Ranking Minority Member Ralph Hall, and Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Ranking Minority Member Tom Feeney are joining me as original cosponsors. Their cosponsorship demonstrates the bipartisan nature of the support for NASA in this Congress, and I want to thank them for their efforts in helping to develop this legislation.

In addition to providing funding and programmatic direction for Fiscal Year 2009, this bill is also intended to provide congressional guidance for the next Administration relative to NASA. I believe that it is critically important for Congress to do so. Without a clear statement of congressional priorities and policies for the nation's civil space and aeronautics enterprise, we run the risk of wasting both time and scarce resources during and after the transition from one Administration to the next. I want to avoid such an outcome if at all possible.

Madam Speaker, 2008 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of the U.S. space program and the establishment of NASA. NASA has accomplished a great deal in both space and aeronautical R&D over those past five decades, and we can all take pride in what has been accomplished. However, we cannot become complacent. If we fail to invest adequately in NASA now, it is unlikely that we will see a comparable record of accomplishment over the *next* five decades—at a great opportunity cost to the nation.

That is because NASA's programs are strongly relevant to addressing the nation's needs. In short, a properly balanced and focused NASA portfolio can pay large dividends to our society as well as to our standing in the world, and maximizing the value of the NASA portfolio to the nation is one of the main goals of the NASA Authorization Act of 2008.

Thus, the bill emphasizes a number of important areas—areas that demonstrate the role that NASA can and should play in improving the quality of life of our citizens, enhancing

our economic vitality, demonstrating American leadership in the international arena through the pursuit of challenging scientific and technological goals, and helping to advance knowledge.

To that end, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 establishes a role for NASA in leading a cooperative international effort on Earth observations research and applications, especially with respect to climate change—one of the major challenges facing our generation. It builds on the recommendations of the National Academies' Earth sciences and applications decadal survey to outline a robust and challenging agenda for NASA to pursue that will help us better understand the causes and impacts of climate change as well as other Earth system phenomena. It is an agenda that will also maximize the opportunities for transitioning those research results into applications that can benefit our society in a myriad of ways.

NASA's aeronautics research program is one of the most *relevant* activities that NASA undertakes as it impacts both public safety and our national economy, and the bill provides guidance to ensure that that aeronautics program will regain its former health and focus so that it can continue to contribute to the wellbeing of the nation. That guidance takes several forms. For example, the legislation provides enhanced funding for aeronautics, but it makes clear that the additional funding is to be used to take NASA's aeronautics research activities to a sufficiently mature state so that the results of that research can be transitioned to the commercial sector as well as to key public sector users. One of the most important examples of the latter is the interagency initiative to develop the next generation air transportation system for the nation, known as NextGen – a program that will improve both the safety and efficiency of our air travel system. The bill makes it clear that we need to do all we can to ensure that the aircraft of the future leave as small an impact on the environment as possible, whether it be noise, energy consumption, or harmful emissions—and that NASA has a critical role to play in that effort. And the bill requires an external review of NASA's aviation safety research to make sure that it is doing all that it can to protect the flying public.

Finally, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 recognizes that America's human space flight activities are not, and should not, be an end in themselves. We need a results-oriented human space flight program that serves the nation's geopolitical goals in addition to advancing America's exploration of outer space. I believe that we provide the foundation for such a results-oriented approach in the bill I am introducing today. Thus, the bill includes provisions to ensure that the International Space Station—a unique orbiting R&D facility that represents a significant investment of resources by both American citizens and those of a host of other nations—will be utilized in as productive manner as possible.

In addition, the ISS is a compelling example of the value of undertaking a cooperative approach to space exploration that we would do well to emulate as we embark on exploration beyond low Earth orbit. To that end, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 makes clear that any human exploration initiative to return to the Moon and venture to other destinations in the solar system should be undertaken as a cooperative international undertaking under U.S. leadership—and that such a cooperative approach will have the best chance of being successfully sustained if the President is personally involved in inviting our friends and allies to participate in such a venture.

It is clear that the 21<sup>st</sup> century will see the emergence and growth of ambitious human space flight programs carried out by a number of nations. It is not in our national interest to get drawn into rerunning a “space race” that we already won almost 40 years ago. Instead, we should be looking to leverage that emerging global interest to promote a peaceful, cooperative approach to space exploration under American leadership. Such an approach can provide a compelling “soft power” rationale for NASA’s human exploration program and be an approach that will deliver clear benefits to America beyond just the demonstration of our technological prowess and national commitment to space exploration.

Madam Speaker, those are just three ways in which continued investment in and support for a properly focused NASA can deliver important benefits to the nation, especially if NASA works hand in hand with our colleges and universities and our commercial sector. However, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the important way in which NASA’s basic and applied research activities help advance America’s competitiveness and promote innovation as well as helping inspire and educate the nation’s next generation of scientists, technologists, engineers, and mathematicians. That is why I and many of my colleagues consider NASA to be just as much a part of America’s innovation agenda as the other agencies called out for support in the “America COMPETES Act” that was enacted into law last year. This bill recognizes that reality and puts NASA on the same doubling path as those agencies.

However, NASA will not be able to contribute effectively in the ways I have just outlined unless we not only invest adequately in NASA’s programs but, equally importantly, direct those investments in ways that maximize their utility. Thus the bill contains a number of provisions focused on each of NASA’s main mission areas to ensure that NASA can make the best use of its capabilities to advance the nation’s space and aeronautics agenda.

Madam Speaker, I am a passionate believer in the value of America’s space and aeronautics programs and the role that NASA can play in delivering significant benefits to the American people. I believe that the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 that I am introducing today will go a long way towards positioning the agency for a productive future when the next Administration takes office, and I hope that Members will support it.