

H.R. 6063

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2008

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the dawn of the United States space program. NASA is the nation's primary civil space and aeronautics R&D agency, and its current civil service workforce consists of approximately 18,400 employees. NASA conducts research and development activities in a wide range of disciplines including aeronautics, astrophysics, heliophysics, planetary science, Earth science and applications, microgravity research, and long-term technology development. NASA also operates a fleet of three Space Shuttles and is assembling and operating the International Space Station (ISS). NASA also maintains a space communications network that supports both NASA missions and other federal agency requirements. NASA's current authorization expires September 30, 2008.

H.R. 6063, the NASA Authorization Act of 2008 reaffirms the basic principles that NASA is and should remain a multi-mission agency with a balanced portfolio of programs in science, aeronautics, and human space flight, including human and robotic exploration beyond low Earth orbit. In addition, the bill also emphasizes the importance of NASA leadership in Earth observations and research, aeronautics R&D to address critical national needs such as the NextGen air traffic control management system, and an exploration program strengthened by international cooperation under strong U.S. leadership.

H.R. 6063 authorizes \$20.21 billion in funding for NASA in FY2009. This includes \$19.21 for:

- Science (\$4,932,200,000)
- Aeronautics (\$853,400,000)
- Exploration (\$3,886,000,000)
- Education (\$128,300,000)
- Space Operations (\$6,074,400,000)
- Cross-Agency Support Programs (\$3,299,900,000)
- Inspector General: (\$35,500,000)

The bill also includes \$1 billion in augmented funding to accelerate the development of the Orion Crew Exploration Vehicle (CEV) and Ares I Crew Launch Vehicle (CLV), which will replace the Space Shuttle. The Shuttle will be retired in 2010 and the CEV/CLV are currently not expected to be completed until 2015. The \$1 billion in augmented funding will help close this gap, when the U.S. will be reliant on other countries or commercial services (if they are available) for transportation to the International Space Station.

H.R. 6063 also adds an additional Space Shuttle flight to deliver the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer to the International Space Station (ISS) and contains provisions addressing near-Earth objects (such as asteroids), commercial initiatives including commercial crew services, NASA institutional capabilities, space weather, space traffic management, innovation prizes, astronaut health care, and study of export control policies.

H.R. 6063 includes recommendations and findings from 16 hearings that the Science and Technology Committee held throughout the 110th Congress to review every major aspect of NASA's programs. The bill was approved by the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee on May 20 and the full Science and Technology Committee on June 4, both by voice vote.