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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON
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CHAIRMAN
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3601

March 24, 2016

The Honorable John A. Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-309, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Honda
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-309, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Honda,

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we respectfully request the Subcommittee include the following report language in the NASA Exploration account:

“Low-cost lunar surface characterization missions

The Committee directs NASA to develop and launch low-cost missions to explore and characterize the lunar surface. NASA shall pursue partnerships, such as funded Space Act Agreements or competitively bid contracts, with commercial industry and International space agencies to develop lunar prospecting programs to better understand the subsurface lunar geology, particularly in-situ water resources. Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, NASA shall submit to the Committee a report detailing planned and ongoing lunar prospecting programs, including program timelines and ongoing and potential partnerships with commercial industry and International space agencies.”

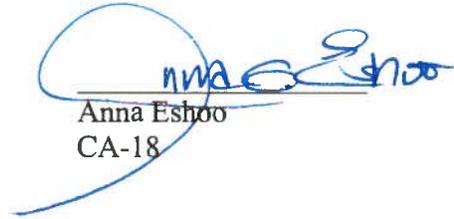
As the United States takes the next steps on the journey to Mars, we believe the Moon will serve as a necessary step and staging ground on that journey. There are thought to be vast resources on the Moon which could potentially serve as raw materials and propellant for our deep space exploration systems. Congress has already directed NASA to work with the private sector to develop propulsion, habitats, and landers necessary for exploration; given the passage of the Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act and the burgeoning space resource industry, it is appropriate for NASA to examine how the agency could leverage this sector.

Along with Ranking Member Honda, we believe inclusion of this report language is necessary for NASA to strengthen partnerships with the private sector and other space agencies, as well as ensure we better understand the extent to which we can leverage the Moon and its resources to successfully complete missions to the Moon, Mars and beyond.

We urge you to include this report language in the NASA Exploration Account. Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,


Jim Bridenstine
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Anna Eshoo
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