PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES BRIDENSTINE
NOMINEE FOR ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

Thank you, Senator Inhofe, for the kind introduction. Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, it is an honor to appear before you as the nominee for Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

I want to recognize my family here with me: my wife, Michelle, and my children Walker, Sarah, and Grant. Without their love and support, I would not be here today in front of you.

NASA is an extraordinary agency with an extremely talented and diverse workforce. It has brought about civilization-changing events and scientific discoveries, has inspired billions, and represents what is exceptional about the United States of America -- a spirit of adventure, of exploration, and the thirst for a greater understanding of the Earth and our universe.

I am truly humbled by the prospect of leading this agency. I grew up reading about the heroes of the Apollo era, like Gene Cernan, a Naval aviator and the last man to walk on the Moon. Stories like his inspired me to be a pilot and to serve my country in uniform.

I piloted the E-2C Hawkeye off the USS Abraham Lincoln in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where I had responsibility for command and control of theaters of battle. I then later became an instructor at the highest levels of Naval aviation, weapons and tactics, which required a high capacity for grasping technical issues and systems. I also had the honor of flying F-18 Hornets at the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center.

In 2012, I ran for Congress and have served here since January of 2013. I continued as a Navy Reservist until transitioning to the Oklahoma Air National Guard in 2015, joining a Special Ops Wing.

In the House of Representatives, I serve on the Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Science, Space and Technology. I have had the great pleasure of working with many of you on this Committee on a bipartisan basis.

NASA is at a crucial time in its history, preparing to explore Deep Space again for the first time in forty-five years. To do this sustainably, we must develop a consensus-driven agenda, based on national interests. Should I be confirmed, it will be my intention to build off the work done by the great people at NASA during the last administration, and to move forward by following the guidance of the NASA Transition Authorization Act, appropriations legislation, and science decadal surveys. We must all do this together.

There are many great near-term opportunities for NASA, none more than the opportunity to once again launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil, and safely return them home. In addition, the first combined launch of the Space Launch System and Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle is drawing near. EM-1 will be a huge test for Deep Space exploration and a crucial test for ultimately sending humans beyond Earth orbit for the first time since 1972. NASA will need healthy resources and full support from the Administration and Congress to keep this program on schedule, and I intend to be the agency's biggest advocate for this goal.

NASA's Commercial Crew partners are drawing closer to bringing us a capability we have not had since the retirement of the Space Shuttle. NASA is a great tool of American foreign policy, and our partnerships in space are shining examples of diplomacy. However, without our own domestic access to space, partnerships turn into dependencies, and this is not sustainable. Getting new vehicles to launch will enhance our leadership, strengthen our partnerships, and bring about capabilities that will not only serve NASA and the International Space Station, but could one day serve other nations and other LEO platforms. Seeing the Commercial Crew program through to success will be a top priority of mine, should I be confirmed.

The success of these programs means our astronauts come home safely. This fact is not lost on me and I do not take this lightly. I know what it means for lives to be on the line when

making decisions. If confirmed as Administrator, I will work to promote a NASA culture where safety, transparency, and independent oversight are celebrated.

No agency can match NASA's return on investment for taxpayer dollars, not just in inspiration, exploration, and science, but also in its direct impact on the economy. NASA technological development drives innovation within the industrial base, generating spin-off technologies in every economic sector. For example, NASA's contributions to aeronautics have made air travel significantly cleaner, safer, and quieter, and have driven a multi trillion dollar-per-year industry. As a pilot myself, I hope to lead NASA through its next era of X-planes, including the Low Boom Supersonic aircraft and the X-57 Maxwell.

If confirmed as Administrator, I also intend to drive the commercial space economy further out beyond Earth. In order to move humans sustainably into Deep Space we must have a vibrant commercial LEO economy, and ISS transition will be a focus if I am confirmed. I also plan to lead a focused space technology program which will develop improved solar electric propulsion, in-space robotic assembly, and closed-loop environmental control and life support systems, all of which will form the foundation of a future expansion of economic activity in LEO and beyond.

Another critical opportunity will be the development of future architectures for exploration and science. The NASA Transition Authorization Act of 2017 directs NASA to continue its efforts to get humans to Mars. The Administration has expressed that it would like NASA to return to the Moon. These goals are not mutually exclusive and in fact work together; I have long been a proponent of returning to the Moon, particularly as a proving ground for missions deeper into space.

We must also recognize that NASA currently has more mission than it has budget. The days of Apollo when NASA's budget represented 3 to 4 percent of the federal budget are not likely to return. Nor would we want to necessarily replicate that model, as it proved to ultimately be unsustainable. Fortunately, times have changed and great advancements have been made. The American and international space industries are more capable than ever before. A lot of this is

due to investments in research and technology development made by NASA decades ago that entrepreneurial Americans have taken and advanced further. So rather than pitting various sectors of this industry against one another, or fitting certain capabilities into pre-determined boxes, should I be confirmed, NASA will develop exploration and science architectures that leverage everything the United States and its international partners have to offer. This way, we will maximize resources and ensure NASA can carry out not only exploration missions back to the Moon and on to Mars, but Earth Science, Planetary Science, Heliophysics, Astrophysics, and Aeronautics research.

NASA has inspired generations of scientists, engineers, and explorers and it continues to do so with incredible discoveries across NASA's science divisions that are unlocking the fundamental mysteries of the universe. If confirmed, I look forward to promoting the scientific community's priorities as embodied by the science decadal survey recommendations that further advance the boundaries of human knowledge and American leadership in the Earth and space sciences. These include the search for ancient and extant life with the upcoming Mars 2020 and Europa missions, the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope and the awe-inspiring images it is anticipated to produce, Parker Solar Probe – a heliophysics mission that will provide a greater understanding of the relationship between the sun and Earth, and Earth science missions like NISAR and IceSat-2 that increase our understanding of the Earth as a system and can enable solutions to the most pressing issues we face on our home planet.

Finally, when it comes to space programs we are discussing timelines of decades, not months. We are also discussing critical data sources and information gathering efforts. There must be consistency and constancy. Without it, NASA experiences shifting priorities and funding, which prevent progress and discovery, waste taxpayer dollars, and erode morale at the agency. This is detrimental to our space program and our nation. Should I be confirmed, it will be my intention to build off the work done by the great people at NASA during the last administration, and move forward following the guidance of the NASA Transition Authorization Act, appropriations legislation, and science decadal surveys. It would be my goal to leave in place programs that can be continued by the next administration regardless of political party. Doing this will require consensus. The only way to get that is to work together as a community –

Congress, the Administration, industry, scientists, academia, non-profits, everybody. It is my commitment to strive every day to ensure we are meeting the national interest in a sustainable, maintainable, and supportable way.

These are exciting times, and it is an honor of a lifetime to even be considered for this position. I have dedicated much of my adult life to serving my country, and should the Senate confirm me I look forward to doing so in a new position. Working together, we can maintain American leadership in space. We can continue to accomplish stunning achievements that inspire the world and encourage other nations to partner with us. We can continue providing valuable data and information about our planet and our universe. We can motivate a new generation of girls and boys to enter the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Thank you again for allowing me to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.