SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Nomination Hearing
Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 10:15 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Jared Isaacman

COVER PAGE

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

DOGE, Workforce, Budgets. Mr. Isaacman, I appreciated our conversation about NASA's priorities and the importance of sustained, robust funding to achieving these goals. You yourself recognized you are a "political newcomer," and told me you thought NASA's funding would be protected because "everybody likes NASA." Unfortunately, the Trump Administration's DOGE team is signaling NASA's budget may be next.

On March 10, pursuant to President Trump's DOGE executive order (EO), NASA carried out its first round of reductions in force—terminating 23 employees, including NASA's Chief Scientist, Technologist, and Economist. A second round of large-scale terminations is expected soon. Meanwhile, according to recent press reports, the White House is considering proposing major cuts to NASA's science budget for FY2026—potentially up to 50 percent.

Question 1: I know you have said you would like to work on the moon and Mars missions in parallel and believe it can be done with NASA's current budget. However, if there is enough funding only for a mission to the moon *or* a mission to Mars – which will you prioritize?

Answer:

Given existing law, I would prioritize the Artemis program. That said, I believe pursuing both lunar and Martian objectives in parallel is not inherently cost-prohibitive. There is meaningful hardware commonality across the existing Artemis Human Landing System (HLS) providers. For instance, both contractors are already required to validate reusable heavy-lift launch capabilities—technologies essential for transporting mass beyond low Earth orbit, whether toward the Moon or Mars.

Historically, NASA managed multiple complex programs simultaneously—Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo—in an era with far less technological capability than we possess today. More than six decades later, with the advances in industry and innovation, I believe the world's premier space agency should be capable of executing multiple major initiatives at a time.

Question 2: Yes or no: Would you support a 50 percent cut to NASA's science budget?

Answer:

I have not reviewed or been party to any official discussions, but a ~50% reduction to NASA's science budget does not appear to be an optimal outcome.

Question 3: Mr. Isaacman, you have expressed ambitious plans for NASA if confirmed. How do you plan to accomplish these priorities if the Administration tries to shrink NASA's budget and slash its workforce?

Answer:

As I stated during the hearing, NASA requires the best and brightest talent from across the nation to accomplish what no other agency or organization can—especially in environments that demand doing more with less. I support the President's commitment to eliminating fraud, waste, abuse, and unnecessary

bureaucracy that can hinder the agency's mission. If confirmed, I will advocate for NASA's priorities and the resources needed to pursue them as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Question 4: In addition to lunar and Martian exploration, do you believe that NASA has other important missions to fulfill, such as conducting and supporting research and development (R&D) in Earth's orbit, space science, Earth science, and aeronautics R&D?

Answer:

Yes. As I noted in my prepared remarks, NASA has a vital role to play across science and exploration. The agency should continue to lead in the high ground of space—not only to return humans to the Moon and journey to Mars, but also to ignite a thriving space economy by maximizing the remaining life and utility of the International Space Station, and serving as a force multiplier for science. Through this work, NASA can accelerate the pace of world-changing discoveries.

Question 5: Do you support reductions in force at NASA?

Answer:

As I stated during the hearing, NASA must be staffed with the best and brightest from across the country to take on its bold and complex mission—especially in times that require greater efficiency. I support the President's goal of eliminating fraud, waste, abuse, and unnecessary bureaucracy that can impede progress. If confirmed, I will advocate for the agency's priorities and the resources necessary to achieve them while ensuring that any organizational changes are thoughtful, mission-focused, and grounded in the need to enhance—not diminish—NASA's ability to deliver on the mission.

Question 6: How will NASA maintain critical expertise in economic and technical areas after these reductions in force? Specifically, without the Office of the Chief Economist, how will the agency publish Economic Impact Reports and how will you make informed decisions regarding the economic feasibility and merits of NASA's efforts to support sustainable commercialization of space activities?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would want to fully understand the rationale behind these reductions—particularly in areas so closely tied to one of my top priorities: igniting a space economy. Like millions of others, I'm excited about the opportunities space offers, but I also recognize that taxpayers cannot carry the full burden of those ambitions indefinitely. To unlock the economic potential of space, we will need the insight of experts who understand how to translate scientific and technical achievements into sustainable, real-world value. That type of expertise—economic and technical—must be preserved and utilized to ensure that NASA's commercial initiatives are both strategically sound and fiscally responsible.

Question 7: Do you consider supporting NASA's workforce and physical infrastructure to be important budget priorities?

Answer:

NASA's people and infrastructure are foundational to the agency's success. The workforce represents the talent and expertise required to pursue groundbreaking science and exploration, while the infrastructure—developed over decades—is a key enabler.

Question 8: In light of the ongoing reductions in force at NASA and potential large-scale budget cuts, are you concerned that NASA will lose and fail to attract the scientific and technical expertise that we need to stay ahead of our competitors?

Answer:

I firmly believe that if NASA continues to deliver on its mission—pursuing what no other agency or organization can—then recruitment, retention, STEM engagement, and public inspiration will follow. People are drawn to purpose, and few missions are as bold or as meaningful as the one NASA undertakes.

NASA Thermoplastics Research and Development. NASA's aeronautics R&D is crucial for both aviation safety and America's global aerospace leadership. Through the Hi-Rate Composite Aircraft Manufacturing (HiCAM) project, NASA is developing technologies that achieve up to 50 percent reduced cost for composite structures while enabling high-rate production for future aircraft.

The Spokane Aerospace Tech Hub will complement this work by taking NASA's lab-proven technologies and completing the critical final steps needed for full-scale industrial production, focusing on thermoplastic composites where Europe and Asia currently lead. This capability represents both an economic opportunity and a national security imperative, ensuring domestic control of technologies essential for next-generation fixed-wing aircraft.

Question 1: Mr. Isaacman, as Administrator, how will you ensure that NASA's aeronautics programs and projects such as HiCAM support critical initiatives like the Spokane Tech Hub that strengthen our domestic supply chains and help American manufacturers compete globally in next-generation lightweight aircraft materials?

Answer:

I care deeply about American competitiveness and believe NASA should focus on advancing next-generation technologies that align with the agency's mission and broader national priorities. If confirmed, I will quickly get up to speed on these initiatives and evaluate how NASA can best support projects like HiCAM and the Spokane Tech Hub to enhance our domestic capabilities and global leadership in aerospace.

Question 2: Will you commit to continue supporting NASA participation in the Advanced Aerospace Materials and Manufacturing Center (AAMMC) as a member of the Tech Hub's consortium of public and private sector members?

Answer:

I am not yet fully familiar with the specifics of the AAMMC, but based on what I understand, it seems both logical and beneficial for NASA to participate in efforts that bring together public and private sector expertise to advance critical aerospace technologies.

Aviation and Spaceflight Safety. This Committee has been focused for several years on our legislative and oversight responsibilities related to aviation safety. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes new measures to improve aviation safety. NASA plays a critical role as a technical advisor to the FAA and developer of technologies essential to both aviation and human spaceflight safety.

In your private sector experience, you've been a pilot and founded a company that provided adversary air training services to the U.S. military. You've also participated in commercial human spaceflight missions.

Question 1: Do you agree that NASA's R&D and technical advisory capabilities are vital to the safety of our aviation system and the safety of the flying public?

Answer:

Yes. NASA has a long and respected history of research and innovation that directly supports aviation safety. Its technical expertise has played a critical role in improving systems, procedures, and technologies that protect the flying public.

Question 2: How would you ensure NASA continues to provide the technical expertise needed by regulatory agencies like the FAA for aviation and commercial spaceflight safety?

Answer:

NASA's management of the Aviation Safety Reporting System provides unique insight into self-reported safety-related incidents, positioning the agency to contribute meaningfully to safety improvements. If confirmed, I would collaborate closely with the FAA and industry stakeholders to identify the most pressing challenges in aviation and commercial spaceflight safety and ensure NASA's resources are directed toward developing solutions that produce measurable results.

Lunar lander redundancy. You have publicly criticized many aspects of NASA and the current Artemis architecture. For example, you previously criticized NASA for supporting two Human Landing System (HLS) lunar landers from two providers. However, dissimilar redundancy ensures safety and competition between more than one provider spurs innovation.

Question 1: Are you still opposed to redundancy? Or do you now support human lunar lander redundancy?

Answer:

Several years ago, I expressed concerns about redundancy after a competitive process had already concluded and a single provider had been selected. At the time, I found it difficult to reconcile having no redundancy for transporting astronauts to lunar orbit—given our reliance on a single vehicle like SLS—

while simultaneously funding multiple redundant systems for the landing itself. My position stemmed from a genuine concern over program delays, budget overruns, and the risk that my children might not see American astronauts return to the Moon within a reasonable timeframe or budget.

Question 2: If you now support HLS lunar lander dissimilar redundancy, please explain why your position has changed.

Answer:

I no longer oppose lunar lander redundancy because the decision has already been made, and significant investments have been committed. As a result, the United States now has an additional commercial provider with heavy-lift launch capability, which enhances national resilience and capacity in space exploration.

Question 3: How would you ensure the safety of our astronauts without the added resiliency created through redundancy?

Answer:

Fortunately, we now have two commercial providers developing redundant lunar landers, which strengthens mission safety and flexibility. However, I believe it's important to highlight that we still lack redundancy in the systems that transport astronauts from Earth to lunar orbit and back. That remains a critical area of focus if we are to ensure complete mission resiliency and crew safety.

Space Launch System (SLS). You previously called NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) "outrageously expensive" and suggested it was the result of the federal government being "lousy at capital allocation."

Question 1: Yes or No: Do you support continued Artemis missions with NASA's Space Launch System?

Answer:

Yes. As I mentioned during the hearing, the SLS is part of the current plan and represents the fastest path to returning American astronauts to the Moon. That said, the program has significant challenges. Even NASA's Inspector General has issued multiple reports critical of the SLS program's cost and schedule performance.

Question 2: Yes or No: Do you plan to cancel NASA's Space Launch System, if confirmed?

Answer:

No. As I stated in the hearing, SLS is the current plan and the fastest means of sending American astronauts to the Moon ahead of our geopolitical rivals. As I emphasized during the hearing, this is a race the United States can't afford to lose. Once those obligations have been met, I believe NASA should transition away from competing with the commercial sector and instead focus its world-class talent and

infrastructure on developing the next generation of exploration technologies—including nuclear spaceships—as a logical next step.

Question 3: According to a March 29, 2025, *Wall Street Journal* report titled, "Elon Musk's Mission to Take Over NASA—and Mars," the Trump White House plans to propose canceling SLS in its FY2026 budget proposal. Are you aware of any such plan?

Answer:

I am not aware of any plan to cancel SLS.

Question 4: Have you discussed the prospect of canceling SLS with any Trump Administration official?

Answer:

No.

Question 5: Have you discussed the prospect of canceling SLS with any SpaceX representative?

Answer:

No.

Question 6: Do you believe canceling SLS would be detrimental to U.S. efforts to return to the moon before China arrives?

Answer:

Yes.

Question 7: If confirmed, do you intend to move NASA away from SLS and toward reliance on commercial heavy lift launch vehicles, such as the SpaceX Starship and Blue Origin New Glenn? Why or why not?

Answer:

As I've said, SLS is the plan today and provides the fastest pathway for returning American astronauts to the Moon and it is imperative we do not lose in this regard. However, at some point in the future, after NASA meets the imperative lunar objectives, I believe the agency should transition away from competing with commercial providers. Instead, NASA's focus should shift toward the technologies that no other agency or organization is capable of developing—such as nuclear-powered spacecraft—that will enable deeper space exploration and sustain U.S. leadership in space.

NASA Funding and Support to the Commercial Space Economy. In your written and verbal testimony before the Committee, you stated that one of your three main objectives for NASA was to "ignite a thriving space economy in low Earth orbit." You further explained that by

working alongside international partners and industry, "we can unlock the true economic potential of space and deliver meaningful benefits to the American people--potentially charting a course for NASA to become a financially self-sustaining agency."

NASA's current support to fostering a thriving low Earth orbit space economy often involves partnerships with commercial industry that include cost sharing, in-kind technical support, and commitments to be an "anchor tenant" customer in specific mission areas and capabilities.

Question 1: Given the nascent nature of many on-orbit commercial space activities and NASA's current role as a source of federal funding and technical assistance to industry, what financial arrangements are you envisioning that would allow NASA to be self-sustaining and independent of significant Congressional appropriations?

Answer:

Like millions of others, I envision an exciting future in space—but I also recognize that budgets are not unlimited. For over 60 years, American taxpayers have invested in the agency's pursuit and exploration of the final frontier. Moving forward, those taxpayer contributions should increasingly be supplemented by the economic potential space has to offer. Ideally, NASA should begin to explore mechanisms for generating offsetting revenue—similar in spirit to the FAA's use of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund.

CLPS and Lunar Science. The Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program has emerged as a critical component in supporting NASA's sustainable lunar presence and meeting civil and national security needs. Key modifications are being considered for CLPS 2.0, such as establishing a regular cadence of missions, adopting block buy contracts, expanding to heavier cargo-class landers, incorporating infrastructure providers, and making CLPS a multi-directorate program.

Question 1: Will you commit to supporting these modifications to CLPS and increasing funding between the Space Technology Mission Directorate (STMD) and the Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate (ESDMD) to expand commercial lunar surface demonstrations?

Answer:

While I cannot speak to future budget increases, I am a strong advocate for the Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program and believe it represents a compelling model not only for lunar missions, but for future exploration and discovery efforts more broadly. CLPS embodies a templated, scalable approach that allows for more frequent, cost-effective "shots on goal," in contrast to NASA's historic reliance on bespoke, high-cost science missions. Expanding this type of model can accelerate discovery, spur commercial innovation, and better position NASA to pursue a wide range of scientific objectives across the solar system.

Astrophysics. We are aware of your past interest in proposing a servicing mission to the Hubble Telescope using private funding. U.S. leadership in astronomy dates back to more than a century, with space-based telescopes revolutionizing our understanding of the universe. Sustaining the

operations of our existing astrophysical observatories is at significant risk due to proposed steep cuts in their operating budgets, despite huge demand for observation time using these telescopes.

Question 1: Will you commit to supporting the full operations cost of Hubble and JWST, to ensure that taxpayers receive the appropriate return on their investments in these missions?

Answer:

I strongly believe in maximizing the value of instruments that have already been funded and are delivering meaningful scientific returns. Telescopes like JWST, Hubble, Chandra, and others represent decades of investment and are producing groundbreaking insights.

Heliophysics. Space weather caused by the relationship between the Sun and the Earth, is an area of NASA science that is vital to the global economy. Warning times for the impact of a direct hit on our planet from a coronal mass ejection (CME) remain dangerously low, putting at risk assets in space and critical infrastructure on Earth. Unfortunately, NASA's most recent budget requests for this field of research have been lower than expected.

Question 1: Will you support growing the Heliophysics budget so that it reaches roughly a billion dollars a year to adequately address space weather risks?

Answer:

I am personally well aware of the risks posed by space weather—not only to our nation's critical infrastructure but also to the lives of astronauts. If confirmed, I will be an advocate for continued investments in heliophysics and for ensuring that we remain vigilant in understanding and mitigating these risks.

Question 2: What are your plans to implement the National Academies most recent Heliophysics decadal survey that called for developing the Geospace Dynamics Constellation (GDC)?

Answer:

I am not yet deeply familiar with the details of the GDC program, but if confirmed, I intend to become well-versed in the latest decadal recommendations and do everything I can to support their thoughtful implementation. The decadal surveys represent a vital, community-driven process for setting scientific priorities, and I take that guidance seriously.

Question 3: Will you commit to protecting the operations and science data analysis budgets for currently operating missions like the Magnetospheric Multiscale (MMS) Mission so that U.S. scientists and researchers, rather than their Chinese counterparts, can continue to lead the world in the analysis needed to better understand the risks from space weather?

Answer:

I am not yet familiar with the specific status of the MMS mission, but I care deeply about maintaining U.S. leadership in science and ensuring that our investments continue to yield important data and

discoveries. If confirmed, I will take a close look at the mission's contributions and work to understand both the risks it helps address and the opportunities it presents for continued leadership in heliophysics.

Elon Musk and Conflicts of Interest. I understand you have a close relationship with Mr. Musk and his company, SpaceX.

I want to be clear about my expectations: The American people must have confidence that their leaders are not beholden to any one person. If you are confirmed, I expect you will go above and beyond the bare minimum and clearly demonstrate that you are acting in the public's interest—not Mr. Musk's or your own.

Context:

My relationship with SpaceX is not unlike NASA's, in that they are currently the only commercial provider offering crewed transportation to and from low Earth orbit. I do not have a close personal relationship with Mr. Musk. While I've spoken with him occasionally over the years in my capacity as a SpaceX customer, I would describe our interactions as professional. I admire and respect his contributions to space and technology, but it would be inaccurate to characterize our relationship as close.

Question 1: How will you ensure that your relationship with Mr. Musk and SpaceX will not result in conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts?

Answer:

I disclosed all financial and contractual relationships during the ethics process and have fully complied with the guidance and conclusions provided by government ethics officials. I will not hesitate to involve NASA's General Counsel, or other designated agency ethics officials, on any matter that could even give the appearance of a conflict. I have no interest in personal gain or benefiting any contractor—I am here solely to serve my country and lead the world's greatest space agency with integrity and transparency.

Question 2: Will you commit to recusing yourself from NASA decisions that would impact SpaceX or Mr. Musk?

Answer:

I fully commit to adhering to my ethics agreement, and whenever there is uncertainty, I will consult with the NASA General Counsel, or other designated agency ethics officials, to ensure full compliance.

Question 3: If no, what will you do to ensure Mr. Musk does not inappropriately influence these decisions?

Answer:

The commercial launch market today is more competitive than at any point in the history of space exploration. NASA will continue to conduct open and fair competitions with the objective of delivering the best capability to taxpayers at the lowest cost.

Question 4: What procedures will you put into place to ensure that Mr. Musk does not inappropriately influence the independent decision making of NASA?

Answer:

NASA has operated for decades alongside a broad base of major contractors—including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Blue Origin, and SpaceX. I trust the agency has well-established internal controls to preserve independent decision-making, and if confirmed, I will uphold and reinforce those standards across the board.

Question 5: To promote public confidence and transparency, will you notify Congress every time Mr. Musk meets with you or anyone on your senior team?

Answer:

Upon confirmation, I will execute my duties as Administrator consistent with applicable government ethics laws and regulations and based on guidance from the NASA's General Counsel or other designated agency ethics officials.

Question 6: You have made the decision to retain a 25 percent ownership interest in Shift4, rather than divesting entirely, while Shift4 maintains a financial relationship with Starlink that pays your company between $10-16 million per year. Given this ongoing financial relationship with one of Mr. Musk's companies, what specific steps will you take, if confirmed, to avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest with Mr. Musk or Starlink?

Answer:

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my positions with Shift4 Payments, LLC and Shift4 Payments, Inc, and its wholly owned subsidiaries. I will also surrender my majority voting control of the business. I will take these actions pursuant to my ethics agreement. Furthermore, upon confirmation, I will execute my duties as Administrator consistent with applicable government ethics laws and regulations and based on guidance from the NASA's General Counsel or other designated agency ethics officials.

Question 7: Will you ensure SpaceX employees are not given access to NASA computer systems, databases, or facilities that present a conflict of interest, like what we have seen at the FAA?

Answer:

No vendor or contractor will have access to NASA systems or data beyond what is explicitly permitted under their agreement with the agency, existing agency policy, or would be otherwise inconsistent with applicable law or regulation.

Question 8: At your hearing, you testified that you had a conversation with Mr. Musk at Mar-a-Lago in late 2024. I understand you told my staff this conversation pertained to Musk's DOGE efforts. What specifically did you discuss with Mr. Musk at Mar-a-Lago?

Answer:

My conversation with Mr. Musk was unrelated to my interview with President Trump for the position of NASA Administrator. We discussed the possibility of me volunteering to support the Trump administration.

Question 9: According to a March 29, 2025, *Wall Street Journal* report titled, "Elon Musk's Mission to Take Over NASA—and Mars," Mr. Musk called you late last year and asked you to become the head of NASA. In your interview with my staff on April 3, 2025, you said this reporting was "1000% false."

Yes or No: Is the above reporting from the *Wall Street Journal* false?

Answer:

Yes, that reporting is false.

Question 10: You testified at your hearing that you have not discussed your plans for NASA with Mr. Musk. For the record: Since November 5, 2024, have you ever discussed anything pertaining to NASA with Mr. Musk?

Answer:

No.

Question 11: Since November 5, 2024, have you been on any text chains with Mr. Musk?

Answer:

No.

Question 12: If your answer is yes to the above question, are any of these text chains conducted over a private messaging application like Signal?

Answer:

N/A

Question 13: Will you abide by all federal records preservation and archiving laws, if confirmed?

Answer:

Yes.

Question 14: How much money have you paid to SpaceX for the two spaceflights you purchased (Inspiration4 and Polaris Dawn)?

Answer:

Pursuant to my ethics agreement, I have terminated all space flight service agreements that I had with SpaceX and all money paid to SpaceX for future missions has been refunded. Furthermore, pursuant to my ethics agreement, I am committed to ensuring that these funds are reinvested in non-conflicting passive investments. The amount I paid to SpaceX for past missions is subject to confidentiality obligations in my contractual agreements with SpaceX.

Question 15: According to a March 29, 2025, *Wall Street Journal* report titled, "Elon Musk's Mission to Take Over NASA—and Mars," you talk "frequently" with SpaceX executive Michael Altenhofen, who was recently named a NASA senior adviser.

Yes or No: Is the above reporting from the *Wall Street Journal* accurate?

Answer:

No.

Question 16: What role and portfolio would Mr. Altenhofen hold at NASA under your leadership, if confirmed?

Answer:

Senior Advisor to the Administrator – Aerospace Engineering.

Legal. I am aware you were detained by U.S. Custom and Border Patrol agents in 2010 on a warrant for drawing and passing checks without sufficient funds to a Las Vegas casino. I am aware you were also sued on four separate occasions around this time (2008-2010) in connection with casino debts and allegations of fraudulent checks, which I understand you dispute.

Question 1: Do you agree that violating legal obligations is unacceptable, irrespective of one's ability to pay any fines or other related costs?

Answer:

Yes—I agree that violating legal obligations is unacceptable, regardless of one's financial means. That said, I believe some additional context is important. In my early 20s, I was fortunate to experience business success at a young age, and I spent time in casinos as an immature hobby. The legal matters referenced were, in fact, forms of negotiation and were all resolved promptly. The incident at the border, following my return from the Olympics, stemmed from a payment issue that had already been resolved, which is why I was detained for only a few hours.

I fully acknowledge this was a brief and immature period in my youth and a poor use of my time and resources. Since then, I've redirected my focus toward far more meaningful and productive pursuits—starting a family, building successful companies, developing an accomplished aviation and space career,

and engaging in significant philanthropic efforts. I have always been transparent about these matters in all security clearance documentation and have held a clearance since 2013 without issue.

Mistakes made in youth don't excuse poor decisions, but I believe growth, accountability, and public service are powerful ways to demonstrate how far one has come.

Question 2: Can you assure the Committee that this type of behavior is in your past?

Answer:

Yes

Climate and Earth Science. The Science Mission Directorate is an important part of NASA that funds scientists through more than 4,000 openly competed research awards – including many in the Earth Science Division. The Earth Science Division operates more than 20 satellites in orbit, sponsors hundreds of research programs and studies, and funds opportunities to put data to use for societal needs. NASA's Climate Change webpage contains critical information based on NASA's collection of long-term observations of the planet.

Question 1: Do you agree that man-made climate change is a real and serious issue?

Answer:

I am not a climate scientist. My background is in business, aviation, and commercial space exploration. I am confident that the Earth's climate has changed throughout its 4.5 billion year history. I believe in studying the causes and consequences of these changes to help mitigate the challenges we face on Earth as a result.

Question 2: Do you support NASA's Earth Science Division and its efforts to develop cutting-edge sensors and data analysis technologies that can improve Earth observations important to climate science, weather modeling, resource management, and the mitigation and response to natural disasters such as wildfires?

Answer:

I fully support NASA's Earth Science Division and its work to advance technologies that improve our understanding of our planet and help respond to the challenges we face on Earth.

Question 3: Do you commit to supporting continued funding through the Earth Science Division for research programs and researchers focused on understanding complex Earth systems and their dynamic interactions?

Answer:

I'm not currently aware of any proposed changes to the Earth Science Division's budget. If confirmed, I will seek to better understand these programs and the contributions they make, and I will advocate for investments that are aligned with NASA's mission and deliver meaningful value to the public.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Mr. Isaacman, in the past you have seemed to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives into your personal and professional life. You stated prior to the Inspiration4 mission that you did not want to send "four rich white guys" to space and you also implemented DEI policies at your companies, Draken and Shift4.

Question 1: Do you still value diversity in the workplace?

Answer:

I value a merit-based culture that results in the most capable team that reflects excellence, commitment, and character – regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Question 2: In your interview with my staff, you said we need the "best and brightest" at NASA. I agree. How did the DEI policies at Draken and Shift4 benefit your multi-million- and billion-dollar companies, and do you think similar policies could benefit the mission of NASA?

Answer:

I value a merit-based culture that results in the most capable team that reflects excellence, commitment, and character – regardless of race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Question 3: Do you think that targeting and eliminating DEI programs and policies will discourage the "best and brightest" from wanting to work at NASA?

Answer:

I was not involved in any decisions to remove specific DEI programs, but I believe that when NASA focuses on bold, challenging missions, it will naturally attract high-caliber individuals from all backgrounds who want to be part of something extraordinary.

Question 4: NASA websites no longer state that the Artemis 3 lunar mission will aim to land the first person of color and the first woman on the moon — a longstanding goal of the Artemis program since the first Trump Administration. What message do you think it sends to the engineers, mathematicians, and scientists of tomorrow that NASA has taken this step to remove this language from the objectives?

Answer:

I was not involved in the decision to remove that language. What I do know is that it has been over 50 years since Americans last walked on the Moon, and despite commitments from every President since 1989—and over $100 billion invested—we still haven't returned. Fixing that challenge should be our highest priority. If we can't get back to the Moon in an economic and safe way, then it won't matter who the crew is. Mission success, especially at an agency like NASA, will ultimately open the door to broader participation and lasting inspiration for future generations.

Campaign Contributions. You made a $2 million contribution to the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee on November 27, 2024. One week later, then-President-elect Trump posted on Truth Social his intention to nominate you for the NASA Administrator role.

Question 1: Did anyone suggest to you that a contribution to President Trump's Inaugural Committee would position you to be nominated for a position in his Administration? If so, who?

Answer:

I reject the premise of this question, and no one ever suggested that a contribution would position me for a nomination.

Question 2: In July 2024, you posted on X that you "have never been in love with either candidate for President." At what point did this opinion change?

Answer:

That comment was part of a longer, multi-paragraph post that deserves proper context. In it, I expressed outrage over the assassination attempt and made clear that such violence has no place in the world's greatest democracy. I also stated that I believed President Trump would be our next President and wished him well in unifying and leading the nation.

To be clear, my position has not changed. I've never claimed to "love" politics, but I have consistently supported President Trump.

Tariffs. President Trump's tariffs are raising the cost of living, crashing the stock market, and causing uncertainty for our business community. As you pointed out in your testimony, most NASA programs are "over budget and behind schedule."

Question 1: Are you concerned that potential scarcity and cost increases within the aerospace manufacturing supply chain caused by tariffs will contribute to further delays and budget overruns?

Answer:

I am not deeply familiar with the full details of NASA's aerospace supply chain, but I would assume that, given the dual-use nature of many space technologies, most of NASA's hardware is manufactured and assembled in the United States. That domestic base likely provides a degree of insulation from tariff-related volatility, though I would want to better understand the nuances if confirmed.

Question 2: Tariffs pose a particular challenge for small companies, which cannot absorb cost increases as easily as big contractors. Are you concerned that some start-up NASA partners will be unable to survive the uncertainty and disruption caused by the Administration's trade war?

Answer:

I support the President's broader objective of reducing the trade deficit and bringing more high-quality manufacturing jobs back to the United States. As someone who has led a public company for many years, I've learned that leadership requires looking beyond short-term market volatility to focus on long-term impact.

SENATOR BRIAN SCHATZ (D-HI)

Support for Space Science

Space science is the cornerstone of NASA's work, driving achievements and discovery and we face growing competition from China in space science investments.

1. Will you commit to increasing investment and providing not less than the FY25 Senate level of $7.576 billion for space science in the NASA budget, including in the fields of astrophysics, planetary science, earth science, lunar science, and heliophysics?

Answer:

I am deeply passionate about science and spoke extensively about its importance during the hearing. If confirmed, I will advocate for strong investment in space science—across astrophysics, planetary science, Earth science, lunar science, and heliophysics—and for securing as much funding as the government can reasonably allocate. I also believe we should look to amplify these efforts through partnerships with international partners, commercial industry, and academia whenever possible.

Support for Astronomical Science

NASA's astrophysical observatories have received bipartisan support over decades. They are also areas where international partnerships will become increasingly important to bring the scale of investment needed to support advanced scientific infrastructure.

2. Will you commit to continuing NASA's leadership in astronomy and ensuring a full return on investment by supporting the full cost of operations for the Hubble Space Telescope and the James Webb Space Telescope?

Answer:

I am a strong believer in maximizing the value of instruments that have already been built, funded, and are producing meaningful scientific returns. The James Webb Space Telescope, Hubble, and Chandra all fall into this category. I've publicly supported each of these observatories and believe their continued operation is essential to advancing our understanding of the universe. I'm generally opposed to small-scale funding cuts that reduce the return on decades of investment in world-class scientific tools.

3. Will you commit to supporting the completion of the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope?

Answer:

To my knowledge, the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope is nearing completion and remains on schedule and within budget—something that is unfortunately rare for flagship programs at the agency. I'm not aware of any reason why it should be canceled, and I would support its completion and successful deployment.

4. Will you commit to funding for the Habitable Worlds Observatory?

Answer:

I'm intrigued by the Habitable Worlds Observatory and the promise it holds, but I would need to learn more before making a commitment. My understanding is that it's not expected to launch until the 2040s. While I support the mission concept, I would also want to explore whether aspects of its scientific objectives can be accelerated through other near-term opportunities.

5. What role do you think international partnerships similar to those in the Habitable Worlds Observatory will play out in the future?

Answer:

I value international partnerships when they are focused, well-managed, and aligned around achieving ambitious goals. Collaboration can be a powerful multiplier when each partner is fully committed and accountable. However, I don't believe in pursuing partnerships simply for the optics—results matter. Effective international collaboration will continue to play an important role in NASA's future, especially for large-scale science missions and deep space exploration.

SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY (D-MA)

Elon Musk

In your nominations hearing, you repeatedly refused to answer whether Elon Musk was in the meet when then-President-elect Donald Trump offered you the position of NASA administrator. I want to give you another opportunity to clarify that question.

Question 1: Was Elon Musk in the room when then-President-elect Donald Trump offered you the position of NASA administrator?

Answer:

My interview was with the President of the United States. The person asking me questions—and ultimately offering me the opportunity—was the President himself

Question 2: How many other people were in the room when then-President-elect Donald Trump offered you the position of NASA administrator?

Answer:

My interview was with the President of the United States. The person asking me questions—and ultimately offering me the opportunity—was the President himself.

Question 3: Did Elon Musk say anything when then-President-elect Donald Trump offered you the position of NASA administrator? If so, please describe those conversations.

Answer:

My interview was with the President of the United States. The person asking me questions—and ultimately offering me the opportunity—was the President himself.

Question 4: The Wall Street Journal reported in March that Elon Musk called you "late last year" and asked whether you would become the head of NASA. Is that reporting accurate? If not, please describe any inaccuracies.

Answer:

No, that reporting is entirely false. Mr. Musk never called me to discuss becoming NASA Administrator, nor did we have any conversations about Mars-related objectives. The only call I received regarding this position came from Secretary Lutnick, who was serving as co-chair of the transition team. That phone interview ultimately led to my in-person meeting and interview with President Trump.

NASA Reduction in Force

Mr. Isaacman, I am deeply troubled by the recent, seemingly rushed decision to dissolve the Office of the Chief Scientist and the Office of Technology, Policy and Strategy at NASA. The

reported abrupt termination of approximately 15 dedicated civil servants, individuals with decades of invaluable experience across NASA's diverse centers and missions, is particularly concerning. These individuals, vital to providing unbiased, science-driven analysis, were given a mere 30-day notice of their Reduction in Force, a move that alarmingly predated any broader restructuring plan or even the Agency's own submission to OPM for such action. This raises serious questions about the rationale behind this decision, and whether it represents a troubling disregard for scientific expertise and the critical role these public servants play in ensuring NASA's mission is based on sound, evidence-based policy.

Question 1: Given my concerns about the abrupt dissolution of these offices and the loss of non-partisan, experienced civil servants providing "unbiased, science-driven analysis," as the potential next Administrator, would you have valued having these offices and their expertise to support you in leading NASA? Recognizing these non-political civil servants provided mission-driven, agenda-free contributions to agency-wide strategy and policy development, distinct from the term appointees who led them, how would you ensure such valuable expertise is retained and utilized under your leadership?

Answer:

Over the last 26 years, I've founded, led, and grown two successful companies, including acquiring and reorganizing organizations to improve performance. I take great pride in assembling high-performing teams and retaining top talent—whether in business, aerospace, or human spaceflight. If confirmed, I intend to bring that same approach to NASA.

Regarding the offices that were closed, I was not involved in those decisions. If confirmed, I will review the rationale behind those closures and evaluate whether the agency is retaining and properly utilizing the expertise necessary to support NASA's mission and strategic planning efforts.

Question 2: If confirmed, would you commit to reviewing the decision to terminate these civil servants and prioritize their reinstatement to appropriate positions within NASA? This would ensure the agency retains their valuable experience and maintains continuity in its scientific and strategic planning efforts.

Answer:

As noted in my previous answer, if confirmed, I will review the rationale behind these decisions and assess whether reinstating any of these individuals would strengthen the agency's ability to deliver on its mission.

NASA Heliophysics and Decadal Survey Priorities

Mr. Isaacman, Massachusetts was proud to see our homegrown Lunar Environment heliospheric X-ray Imager (LEXI), developed by students and faculty at Boston University, successfully land on the Moon aboard NASA's Blue Ghost Mission 1 spacecraft in March. LEXI is now sending back invaluable global images of the interaction between the solar wind and Earth's magnetic field—data that is essential to understanding the space environment around our planet.

Heliophysics research is foundational to protecting our infrastructure, ensuring astronaut safety, and supporting the success of both human and robotic missions in space.

Question 1: Given the release of the 2024 Solar and Space Physics Decadal Survey, how do you plan to support NASA's Heliophysics Division and advance its top priorities, including sustaining the Diversify, Realize, Integrate, Venture, Educate (DRIVE) initiative and expanding the cadence of the Heliophysics Explorers program, particularly the Small Explorer (SMEX) and Mid-sized Explorer (MIDEX) missions and Missions of Opportunity (MO)?

Answer:

I believe NASA should be a force multiplier for science. Advancing affordable, high-impact discovery must be a top priority. I'm very supportive of SMEX, MIDEX, and similar initiatives that can increase the cadence of meaningful scientific returns in a cost-effective way. If confirmed, I would look forward to working closely with the Heliophysics Division, academic institutions, and other partners to help implement the priorities outlined in the Decadal Survey and accelerate the rate of breakthrough discoveries.

Question 2: Do you agree that strategic investments in Heliophysics should remain a key priority for NASA?

Answer:

Given how central the sun is to our existence, it makes sense that we'd want to know as much about it as possible.

NASA Science Mission Directorate Funding

Mr. Isaacman, NASA's science missions are foundational to the agency's global leadership in space and to the public's trust in its work. Programs like the Great Observatories—including Chandra, which is operated out of my home state of Massachusetts—provide essential data on everything from newborn stars to galaxy clusters, which cannot be captured from Earth. It supports approximately 200 jobs requiring highly specialized X-ray expertise.

You've previously expressed support for these observatories. However, we've seen repeated attempts to siphon funds from the Science Mission Directorate to cover cost overruns in the Artemis program. That approach undermines NASA's long-term scientific mission.

Question 1: Given the importance of NASA Science to the nation, can you commit that, under your leadership, funding for the Artemis program will not come at the expense of the Science Mission Directorate which manage flagship observatories like Chandra?

Answer:

As you've noted, I've been very public in my support for exploration assets like Chandra that continue to generate meaningful scientific returns. I don't believe in cutting small-dollar programs that are delivering real value—especially in science. If confirmed, I will advocate for protecting those investments and

ensuring that science remains a core pillar of NASA's mission, even as we pursue ambitious goals through Artemis and other human spaceflight programs.

NASA and Climate Data

Mr. Isaacman, from monitoring sea-level rise to polar ice loss to wildfires, NASA's satellites are the backbone of climate research used by scientists, policymakers, and the public across the globe.

NASA's Earth Observing System collects and archives more than 147 terabytes of data each day. This data underpins climate action efforts at every level of government, drives global research collaborations, and informs life-saving disaster response. It's a public good relied on by communities worldwide.

Yet the Trump administration is undermining that work. A recent investigation found that large swaths of climate datasets, visualizations, and web tools—once publicly accessible—have been altered or taken down. This unprecedented rollback of public information compromises scientific continuity and transparency at a time of accelerating climate threats and extreme weather events.

Question 1: If confirmed, will you commit to fully restoring and maintaining access to data as well as resisting any political pressure to sideline climate research?

Answer:

As I mentioned during the hearing, I am not currently aware of any restrictions related to public access to NASA data, but if confirmed, I would look into this matter closely. I strongly support Earth science and believe the data NASA collects can play a critical role in supporting the agriculture industry and mitigating the impacts of wildfires, droughts, flooding, and other natural hazards.

SENATOR GARY PETERS (D-MI)

1. Mr. Isaacman, I was happy to hear you say in the hearing that it is a fundamental responsibility of NASA to inspire the next generation. I agree that NASA's missions play a key role in doing so. The NASA Office of STEM Engagement also develops the next generation of scientists by providing for Michigan's Space Grant Consortium, which funds graduate fellowships, undergraduate research grants, faculty research grants, educational programs at the K-12 level, and NASA internships.

President Trump's previous NASA Administrator proposed zeroing out the budget for NASA's Office of STEM Engagement – something Congress blocked. A failure to invest in the next generation hamstrings U.S. competitiveness and makes it difficult to build on the work we have already invested billions in.

If confirmed, are you committed to continuing funding for NASA's STEM education programing? Do you agree that it is important for NASA to fund workforce initiatives that ultimately support their exploration accounts?

Answer:

I hope my track record—both through my human spaceflight missions and my financial support for programs like Space Camp—makes clear how much I value STEM education. As I emphasized during the hearing, it all begins with completing the mission. It's been over half a century since Americans last walked on the Moon. Until we deliver on those goals, we are not living up to our full inspirational potential.

That said, I strongly support STEM initiatives that get students excited about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

2. Mr. Isaacman you've mentioned your passion for science and shared that you believe President Trump is hoping to usher in a golden age of science.

I remain deeply concerns about potential budget and staffing cuts that would only favor funding for the exploration account. A fundamental part of the Artemis missions are its science missions which seek to better understand lunar resources in preparation of sending humans to the moon. Beyond supporting exploration efforts NASA's science budget includes programs to research things like space weather which impacts our everyday lives.

Recent reporting suggests that OMB is planning to propose cutting NASA's Science budget by $3.4 billion, or about 45%. Do you think these cuts would reduce science capacity at the agency to unlock the future of space?

Answer:

I have not been privy to any internal budgetary planning or decision making conversations at the agency. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing OMB's recommendations and working with

Congress to determine the appropriate level of funding to ensure NASA can execute its mission. That said, I will always be an advocate for NASA and its science portfolio.

3. Recent reporting suggests that OMB is planning to propose cutting NASA's Science budget by $3.4 billion, or about 45%. If confirmed, will you commit to pushing back on OMB and the President if they recommend these cuts?

Answer:

I have not been privy to any internal budgetary planning or decision making conversations at the agency. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing OMB's recommendations and working with Congress to determine the appropriate level of funding to ensure NASA can execute its mission. That said, I will always be an advocate for NASA and its science portfolio.

4. Mr. Isaacman, in the hearing you stated your commitment to following existing law which directs the NASA Administrator to "establish a program to develop a sustained human presence in cis-lunar space or on the Moon". You also mentioned that you do not believe that the Space Launch System is a good long-term option for getting astronauts to and from the moon with great frequency. Commercial heavy lift launch vehicles have been suggested as potential alternatives for future missions to and from, but work is still being done to make them fully operational. What do you envision as the future alternative to the SLS and how will you ensure that NASA has the necessary resources to partner with commercial companies and invest in these alternatives?

Answer:

As I've said before, I believe the SLS and existing Artemis architecture represent the fastest way to get American astronauts back to the Moon. But over the long term, it's not a sustainable or affordable solution. Fortunately, the commercial launch market is stronger than ever. Since SLS was first established, companies like Blue Origin, ULA, SpaceX, and Rocket Lab have made major investments in heavy-lift capabilities. Competition drives down costs and accelerates innovation. In that respect, at some point the government will need to move on from competing with commercial industry in launch and invest in the next generation spaceship technology, what no other agency or organization is capable of delivering, like the practical application of nuclear propulsion.

5. Programs and contracts like those in Artemis support thousands of jobs across the U.S. manufacturing supply chain. This is extremely important in Michigan especially where suppliers are critical to NASA's mission and goals. Any cuts to NASA programs equate to job cuts in Michigan and across the country.

Do you agree that part of the role NASA's programs can and do play is to strengthen critical national security manufacturing supply chains and jobs in aerospace?

Answer:

Absolutely—but I also believe that every partner, vendor, and program must deliver. We should be paying for results and holding all stakeholders accountable when expectations aren't met. I'm not putting all the responsibility on contractors—NASA's own program management plays a role as well. But no one

should be satisfied that every President since 1989 has called for a return to the Moon and a path to Mars, and despite more than $100 billion invested across Constellation and Artemis, we have yet to fly a single crewed mission around the Moon let alone land on it. That must change.

6. Every year I coordinate a bipartisan letter to our Appropriations Commerce, Science, and Justice subcommittee asking that they support the funding necessary to ensure Artemis missions can launch on time. Delays in the launch schedule not only delay scientific discovery but can lead to additional costs.

What is your plan to ensure that NASA has the necessary resources to maintain Artemis' launch schedule? If your plan is to speed up the launch schedule, how exactly do you plan to do so?

Answer:

My approach is shaped by 26 years of experience leading high-performance teams in business, along with a background in aerospace and commercial space. I've built companies from the ground up, led acquisitions and turnarounds, and flown to space twice on record-breaking missions. What I've learned is that results don't come from slogans or slide decks—they come from leadership that's present, hands-on, and relentlessly focused on mission execution. NASA knows this better than anyone—based on what has been accomplished historically—we just need to restore that mission-first culture.

If confirmed, I'll roll up my sleeves, get in the trenches with the team, and lead a cultural and program management transformation. We'll take a hard look at the real problems—both internal and external—that slow progress and put timelines and budgets at risk. Key areas of focus will include:

- Reducing organizational bureaucracy to streamline communication and accelerate decision-making
- Strengthening program management with clear ownership, defined timelines, and measurable results
- Driving vendor accountability through transparent performance metrics and consequences when expectations—especially those owed to taxpayers—are not met
- Reinforcing a culture of urgency and ownership at every level of the agency—we don't go home until the day's problem is solved because no one else will solve it for us--and then we do it all over again the next day

NASA has the talent and resources to achieve the near-impossible. But when major programs fall behind, it delays world-changing discoveries, fails to meet our inspirational obligations, and undermines the credibility of the agency the public entrusts with its hope for future generations.

7. Mr. Isaacman, we have seen massive reductions in staffing across agencies. Earlier this year it was reported that NASA negotiated with the Office of Personnel Management to avoid mass layoffs. Additionally, there are reports that up to 5% of NASA's staff already accepted a buyout agreement.

We have also heard that NASA staff are awaiting a realignment plan that will further reduce NASA staffing numbers. You have big plans for NASA, but I fail to see how we achieve them if we are not retaining talent.

What is your plan to ensure that NASA remains sufficiently staffed? How do you plan to do that in an environment where NASA's budget decreases?

Answer:

If confirmed, I hope to be in a position to lead these discussions thoughtfully and constructively. As I stated in my prepared remarks, I'm stepping away from my business career—and my commercial spaceflight career—because I believe I owe a debt to this nation and want to contribute to NASA's extraordinary mission.

I'm not here for a title. I'm here to help the agency, not dismantle it. And if NASA is working on what no other organization on Earth can accomplish—world-changing missions—I believe it will continue to attract and retain the talent it needs to succeed.

8. Have you communicated with - including over messaging app, email, or in person – Elon Musk since accepting your nomination?

Answer:

No.

8a. If yes, what was the substance of the communication?

N/A

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN (D-WI)

1. Inspiring the Next Generation of STEM Professionals

Each year, the Wisconsin Space Grant Consortium hosts an annual First Nations Launch National Rocket Competition. This competition serves as an opportunity for students at Tribal Colleges and Universities, Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions, and members of American Indian Science and Engineering Society chapters to gain experience and explore engineering and design principles to inspire these students to pursue careers in aerospace.

If confirmed, will you support programs, such as the First Nations Launch National Rocket Competition, *that encourage, inspire and train students from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in aerospace and STEM?*

Answer:

While I am not directly familiar with the First Nations Launch National Rocket Competition, I firmly believe it is a core obligation of NASA to inspire the next generation to join the adventure and reach even higher. I am a strong advocate for STEM programs—especially those that deliver high-impact outcomes from relatively small investments.

2. Role of Commercial Space Industry

In your testimony, you briefly discussed the importance of determining the future of the space economy before the de-orbiting of the International Space Station.

Why do you believe scientific innovation alone is not justification to continue investing in the ISS or future space stations? What do you picture the future of the space economy to look like and what economic value do you envision discovering if you are confirmed? What role do you believe commercial space companies should play in determining the economic activity in space?

Answer:

Like millions of others, I envision a future where humanity becomes a spacefaring civilization, rich in scientific discovery and exploration. But I'm also realistic—budgets are not unlimited. For space to reach its full potential, we must unlock its economic value. If the ISS or future space stations are to continue operating in the long term, they cannot rely solely on government funding; there must be a pathway toward sustainable commercial engagement.

If confirmed, I would welcome input from the best and brightest across NASA, academia, and industry. In the near term, I believe the greatest opportunities are in the pharmaceutical and biotech sectors, where the microgravity environment can yield breakthroughs. Over the medium term, mineral extraction and on-orbit manufacturing may also become economically viable.

Commercial space companies should play an active and collaborative role in shaping this future. Alongside international partners and academic institutions, they can help identify the highest-potential

science and research that will ignite a true space economy. NASA's role should be to lead, convene, and help de-risk that future—while keeping its focus on what no other agency or organization can accomplish.

3. NASA Budget

It has been reported that the preliminary version of President Donald Trump's budget calls for a cut of 47% to NASA science.

If NASA's budget is cut by 47%, how would this impact future science projects at NASA? Would any projects be fully terminated?

Answer:

If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing OMB's recommendations and working with Congress to determine the appropriate level of funding to ensure NASA can execute its mission. That said, I will always be an advocate for NASA and its science portfolio.

4. Conflicts of Interests

During your hearing, you refused to answer whether Elon Musk was in the room when President Trump interviewed you and offered you the NASA Administrator appointment.

To your knowledge did Elon Musk recommend your nomination to President Trump?

4a. *Do you believe it would have been improper for Elon Musk, who holds extensive contracts with NASA and deep conflicts of interest, to be in attendance for a nominee's interview with the President for the NASA Administrator appointment? If no, why?*

Answer to 4a and 4b:

I've heard that several retired Generals and Admirals I worked with while running my defense company had recommended me for different positions. I also had just returned—about two months before my nomination—from a record-breaking space mission. During that mission, my crew and I traveled farther from Earth than any humans in more than half a century. Two of my crewmates became the women who have traveled farthest from Earth, and we conducted dozens of research experiments, tested a new EVA suit during a 'spacewalk', and pioneered next-generation communications—all widely covered in the media. So, while the nomination personally came as a surprise and an honor, it does not seem that unusual that my name was being circulated.

It is not my place to speculate on hypothetical situations. As I've said previously, my interview was with the President of the United States. He asked the questions, and he made the decision.

SENATOR JACKY ROSEN (D-NV)

Future of Space Stations

The request for proposals for phase two of the Commercial Low Earth Orbit Development Program is expected to define NASA's level of investment and commitment, awarding contracts to two or more commercial providers to ensure redundancy and competition for services, which are essential to driving innovation and economic growth.

Question 1: Given the critical need for these providers to be operational before the ISS deorbits, if confirmed, how do you plan to ensure the timely development and deployment of these stations?

Answer:

There are two parallel priorities I would focus on if confirmed.

First, we need to prioritize the highest-potential science and research on the ISS that could help "crack the code" on a sustainable orbital economy. These commercial stations won't succeed unless there's a strong value proposition in space, and NASA has a role to play in identifying and advancing the research that could unlock it—particularly in sectors like biotech, pharmaceuticals, and advanced manufacturing.

Second, we need to identify and clear the obstacles currently holding back commercial providers—whether they're technical, financial, regulatory, or bureaucratic. That means working closely with the companies involved, understanding where delays or hardships are occurring, and eliminating roadblocks wherever possible.

We are on the clock with the ISS's end of life timeline. If confirmed, I will do all I can to bring urgency and focus to ensuring a successful transition that doesn't leave a gap in our presence in low Earth orbit or jeopardize the emergence of a true space economy.

NASA's Commitment to Commercial LEO Destinations (CLDs) Project

Commercial space companies have expressed concerns about overburdensome requirements, regulatory delays, indemnification, and the unpredictability of NASA's commitment to Commercial LEO Destinations project.

Question 1: How will you ensure continuous presence in space and prevent a funding or policy gap that could undermine the success of these private space stations?

Answer:

One of the greatest accomplishments of the ISS has been its ability to sustain human life in low Earth orbit over long durations. Meanwhile, the cost of transporting astronauts to and from LEO has come down significantly from prior generation vehicles like Shuttle. So, the challenge today isn't launch—it's the **economic viability** of commercial LEO destinations.

As currently contemplated, these future stations will rely in part on government subsidies, but that model is unlikely to be sustainable in the absence of a real on-orbit economy. That's why I emphasized during my testimony how critical it is to maximize the remaining life of the ISS—not just to continue exploration, but to crack the code on the space economy and give commercial providers the best possible chance to succeed. If confirmed, I'll prioritize this effort and do all I can to ensure a seamless transition that avoids a gap in presence and purpose in LEO.

Question 2: Given your private sector background, what changes would you advocate for in NASA's approach to managing technical requirements, cost, schedule, and risk to make it more agile and commercially friendly while maintaining accountability?

Answer:

To start, I'm not convinced the current system enforces any real accountability. Programs run over budget, fall behind schedule, and the only consequence seems to be cancellation. That's not sustainable for an agency with world-changing goals.

If confirmed, I will get in the trenches to understand the root causes. It's clear that bureaucratic layers have formed—often serving their own preservation rather than the mission. In the private sector, resources—whether people, capital, infrastructure, or leadership—are aligned around clear goals with defined outcomes and performance metrics. That makes it easy to spot when something is off track and implement course corrections early.

I intend to bring that mindset and my experience running two large, successful companies—including in aerospace—into NASA. The agency doesn't lack talent or capability; it needs a clearer alignment between mission and execution, and a mission-first culture that values execution, ownership and urgency. That's how we'll restore momentum and complete the ambitious goals the nation expects from NASA.

NASA EPSCoR Funding

One of my top priorities in Congress is supporting growth in STEM fields by investing in education and workforce training that will bolster STEM opportunities for everyone. As you know, NASA EPSCoR is a joint federal-state program designed to allow more states to participate in space and aeronautics research. In Nevada, schools such as the University of Nevada, Reno and the Desert Research Institute rely on NASA EPSCoR seed funding for research and scholarships in order to enhance STEM opportunities.

Question 1: How can Congress further support the ESPCoR program and ensure NASA can continue to grow the program's reach and its diversity in scientific research?

Answer:

As I mentioned during my testimony, NASA has a fundamental obligation to inspire the next generation to join this grand adventure and aim even higher. That inspiration starts by getting back to the mission—landing astronauts on the Moon and Mars, launching new telescopes, and delivering breakthrough scientific discoveries that captivate the world.

But inspiration alone isn't enough—we also need to provide pathways for participation. Programs like EPSCoR are essential because they help connect students and researchers from underserved regions and institutions to the opportunities that NASA provides.

Initiatives in STEM Funding

I'm proud to have introduced several bipartisan STEM-related bills over the past several years, including my STEM RESTART Act with Senator Hyde-Smith, the Rural STEM Act with Senator Wicker – which was included in the CHIPS and Science Act – and the Building Blocks of STEM Act with Senator Capito, which was signed into law in the 116th Congress. However, there is still more work to be done, particularly in breaking down barriers that stand in the way of students of all ages and backgrounds from pursuing STEM education and STEM careers.

Question 1: How can NASA work to break down barriers to young people in STEM so that in the future you have the workforce you need to continue to make scientific breakthroughs?

Answer:

I firmly believe that if NASA can deliver on the mission—what no other agency or organization on Earth can achieve—then recruiting, retention, STEM engagement, and inspiration will largely take care of themselves. That's the first step: accomplish bold, world-changing goals that ignite imagination and ambition.

But we also have to create tangible pathways for participation that also serve NASA's mission. As I mentioned in my remarks, NASA should be a force multiplier for science—leveraging its talent, infrastructure, and partnerships to push down opportunities to academia.

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

Q1. I recently introduced legislation to hold special government employees, like Elon Musk, accountable and prevent them from acting in their own financial interest. I'm concerned to hear media releases that discuss SpaceX's connection to China, specifically, the article published March 26, 2025, titled "How Elon Musk's SpaceX Secretly Allows Investment from China," which details how investors from China buy stakes in the company as long as funds are routed through offshore hubs. As you know, Musk's company SpaceX has been awarded many NASA contracts, including their human lander system (HLS) for the Artemis moon missions. I understand that the contracting officer at NASA who awarded SpaceX this contract now works for SpaceX overseeing the Starship development. **Do you believe that companies with contracts like the HLS should receive investment from China? Will NASA proactively identify and mitigate conflicts of interest and enforce government transparency?**

Answer:

I'm not familiar with the specific article or any related claims regarding a particular vendor. That said, I would hope that NASA—and the broader U.S. government—have implemented the appropriate safeguards to ensure open, fair competition while also protecting against influence from geopolitical adversaries. If confirmed, you can count on my full commitment to protecting American interests, ensuring transparency, and maintaining a level playing field that advances our national security and space leadership.

Q2. Commercial providers have put forth faster and cheaper solutions than the current NASA architecture has laid out. **If confirmed, can you ensure that NASA will fairly consider all commercial procurement options to fund multiple industry concepts through early design phases to maximize innovation?**

Answer:

Competition is a core ingredient of our economic system—and I'm a strong believer in its power to drive both innovation and affordability. If confirmed, I will ensure that NASA remains open to new ideas and that we create space for commercial solutions to be evaluated fairly, particularly in early-phase development where multiple concepts can unlock future capability and cost efficiencies.

Q3. Congress has consistently supported the development of a sustainable Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) economy, including utilizing microgravity research, space-based manufacturing, and human spaceflight, while leveraging commercial platforms to reduce government costs and expand market opportunities. **What role do you see for NASA in ensuring the United States is a leader in capabilities such as space-based manufacturing and microgravity research?**

Answer:

As I stated in my prepared remarks and throughout my testimony, unlocking a sustainable space economy is imperative. After more than 60 years of space exploration, the space economy remains centered around

launch, observation, and communications—largely funded by government contracts. That is not enough for the future we all imagine in space.

If confirmed, I will prioritize identifying the highest-potential science and research opportunities—especially in areas like biotechnology, pharmaceutical development, and on-orbit manufacturing—and work closely with commercial partners, academia, and international allies to help ignite a true economic engine in space.

Q4. NASA's Commercial Low-Earth Orbit Development Program is critical to ensuring that China does not surpass the U.S. in leadership in LEO. The recently introduced NASA Transition Authorization Act pushes NASA to down select to two commercial providers by March of 2026, with one being operational by 2030. **What actions will you take to ensure an orderly transition to commercial space stations to maintain our continuous human presence? What are the key challenges you foresee in ensuring there is no gap in human presence in LEO, and how should NASA support a smooth handover to commercial platforms?**

Answer:

Keeping astronauts alive in space for long durations is one of the ISS's greatest achievements. Meanwhile, the cost of launching to and from LEO has declined steadily over the decades. So the challenge isn't the continuous 'heart beat' in space—it's the **economic viability** of commercial space stations.

As they are currently structured, many commercial platforms are expected to rely on government subsidies, yet we haven't seen a self-sustaining on-orbit economy emerge. That's why, during my testimony, I emphasized the importance of making the most of the ISS's remaining lifespan—to help crack the code on the space economy and give commercial providers the best possible shot at success. If confirmed, I will make this a priority and ensure NASA provides the technical, logistical, and strategic support needed for a seamless transition.

Q5. Will you commit to supporting the development of a national strategy for commercial spaceports, funding for spaceports, and best practices that could be led by NASA?

Answer:

I believe it is a national security vulnerability to have too few facilities for the launch and recovery of space vehicles. If confirmed, I would work with the Department of Defense, FAA, and other stakeholders to ensure the United States has the infrastructure capacity to meet the growing demands of national security, commercial, and civil space operations.

Q6. The Suborbital Crew Program (SubC) offers government employees, including NASA astronauts and researchers, the opportunity to train aboard suborbital vehicles as a part of their preparations for longer-durations missions. The SubC program is also a way for astronauts to practice on experiments they might be conducting in microgravity in the future. **Can you provide an update and explain your support for utilizing additional flight training in space and more time in microgravity for our NASA astronauts and**

researchers through the SubC program? After all, the first American in space flew a suborbital mission and we can all agree on the benefits Alan Shepherd's flight had on the future of the Astronaut Corps.

Answer:

Suborbital spaceflight offers meaningful microgravity experience at significantly lower cost and likely lower risk than orbital missions. It's an efficient capability that we should be using to prepare astronauts and researchers for longer-duration missions and experiment validation.

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

STEM & Science Missions

NASA's missions fulfill national goals and advance science. From the Artemis Mission to return to the moon, the Hubble and James Webb Space Telescopes, and returning samples collected from asteroids and Mars, space is a powerful tool to attract students to STEM fields.

Q1: Mr. Isaacman, in what way could these key NASA missions inspire the next generation of scientists?

Answer:

Exactly right—NASA inspires by doing the mission. When we accomplish the near-impossible, when we explore the unknown and deliver breakthrough discoveries, we ignite the imagination of the next generation. That's how students choose to pursue science, technology, engineering, and math—not just because they're told to, but because they want to be part of something bold and meaningful.

Hubble has inspired the world for decades. Now it's time to get the next generation of telescopes into orbit—and astronauts on the Moon and eventually Mars. That's how we continue the cycle of inspiration and achievement.

Q2: If confirmed, will you commit to prioritizing the advancement of NASA's existing portfolio of science and STEM missions, including funding new and existing space telescopes and partnerships with academic institutions?

Answer:

Consistent with my testimony, I want NASA to be a force multiplier for science. That means launching more missions—more telescopes, more probes, more rovers—and deepening partnerships with academia (and their healthy endowments) to ensure students and researchers are active participants in that work.

If confirmed, you can expect me to be a passionate advocate for science. The discoveries we make—and the way we make them—are foundational to both our national competitiveness and our ability to inspire future generations.

Artemis and Gateway

NASA is currently partnering with commercial space companies to return astronauts to the moon and establish an orbiting lunar outpost that can be used for scientific research and as a pathway for missions to Mars.

Q3: How do you plan to prioritize exploration on the Moon under the Artemis Program, led by NASA in collaboration with commercial partners?

Answer:

As I've stated in previous responses and during my testimony, I believe the current Artemis architecture is the fastest path to landing American astronauts back on the Moon—something every President has called for since 1989. That said, it's clear the program has struggled with cost, schedule, and execution. Over $100 billion has been invested in this effort, and yet we still haven't flown humans around the Moon let alone landing on it.

If confirmed, I will focus on getting Artemis back on track. That means working alongside NASA leadership, commercial partners, and program managers to address the root causes of delays—bureaucracy, program misalignment, and lack of accountability—and restoring a mission-first culture across the agency. We must deliver results, demonstrate progress, and prove to the world that NASA can once again achieve the extraordinary.

Q4: If confirmed, how will you plan for human exploration on Mars while maintaining a consistent lunar presence?

Answer:

Artemis is the current plan, but that doesn't preclude parallel efforts to pursue the President's inspiring and ambitious goal of sending American astronauts to Mars. In fact, many of the technologies and capabilities NASA is already investing in—such as surface nuclear power systems, nuclear electric propulsion, and nuclear thermal propulsion—are highly relevant for Mars exploration, though they remain underfunded and subscale. Additionally, commercial partners under Artemis are developing very heavy-lift launch vehicles that could support both lunar and Mars missions.

Mission Priorities

The Mars Sample Return mission is key to advancing our understanding of the red planet. NASA also conducts missions that observe the Earth to help support water conservation, forest health, and crop management.

Q5: How will you balance NASA's priorities between planetary exploration and Earth science missions?

Answer:

I am passionate about all of NASA's science and exploration missions—including both planetary and Earth sciences. Prioritizing these efforts isn't about choosing one over the other, but rather about identifying where the greatest breakthroughs are possible.

Some of this prioritization is guided by the decadal survey process, which I fully respect. But if confirmed, I would work closely with NASA's experts and stakeholders to evaluate missions based on their scientific promise, potential economic value, and relevance to national security. Whether we're uncovering the secrets of other worlds or advancing our understanding of Earth, the goal is the same: to deliver meaningful, world-changing results.

Spectrum

Space operators rely on spectrum during launch, to support in-space operations, and for transmitting scientific data and imagery from Earth observations. As commercial uses of spectrum continue to increase, it is important to ensure that federal agencies can continue conducting their missions while using spectrum efficiently.

Q6: How does NASA plan to continue working with federal partners such as the NTIA and FCC to ensure sufficient spectrum is available to support science, commercial, and national security missions in a growing space ecosystem?

Answer:

If confirmed, I would advocate for preserving the spectrum NASA requires to fulfill its on-orbit mission requirements. That said, I also believe we can take a proactive approach to reducing future demand. Several commercial companies are already investing in advanced technologies like optical/laser forms of communications, which offer high-bandwidth alternatives to traditional systems.

Space Debris

Satellites and space stations can be damaged or destroyed by orbital debris, threatening human lives in addition to commercial and national security missions in space. Globally, other nations are pursuing demonstration missions to refine their technologies to remediate space debris. While NASA has studied space debris issues extensively, the U.S. cannot fall behind in deploying its own technological capabilities.

Q7: How can NASA help catalyze investments in developing and demonstrating technologies on-orbit, such as active debris removal, to support the safe and resilient use of space?

Answer:

As I mentioned during my hearing, I'm very familiar with this issue—MMOD (Micrometeoroid and Orbital Debris) was the greatest threat to both of my space missions. While I'm not opposed to investing in active debris removal technologies, we need to be clear-eyed about the real challenge: the majority of the risk comes from millimeter-sized debris traveling at orbital velocities—objects too small to see or track but large enough to cause serious damage.

From a policy standpoint, the best thing we can do is stop making the problem worse. That means stronger international norms and accountability around responsible behavior in space—such as proper deorbiting practices, ending destructive ASAT testing, and avoiding uncontrolled satellite breakups, which are often caused by less responsible foreign actors.

International Space Station

The International Space Station (ISS) is scheduled to operate through 2030, providing a platform for human presence in space and an opportunity to perform scientific research in microgravity. Currently, NASA is working with the commercial sector to support the development of future commercial LEO destinations, which will maintain the United States' presence in LEO and offer the opportunity for continued microgravity research on-orbit.

Q8: How do you recommend NASA manage the ISS transition to ensure a safe deorbit plan while maintaining continued U.S. presence in low earth orbit?

Answer:

To my understanding, NASA has already held a competition and selected a vendor to support the safe deorbiting of the ISS.

As such, my priority would be to maximize the remaining value of the ISS before it is decommissioned. We must prioritize the highest-potential science and research that can be conducted on the station—and do everything possible to "crack the code" on an on orbit economy. The success of commercial LEO destinations will depend on what we learn and accomplish now.

SENATOR LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER (D-DE)

NASA's Space Grant program has played a critical role in expanding STEM education and research opportunities in states like Delaware.

1. If confirmed, will you commit to supporting the Space Grant program and ensuring its continued funding?

Answer:

Programs like Space Grant help turn that inspiration into action by providing hands-on opportunities, academic support, and real pathways into the workforce. If confirmed, I would strongly support efforts that connect students to NASA's mission and help develop the talent needed to lead in space, science, and innovation.

2. How do you view NASA's role in fostering STEM education and workforce development through programs like Space Grant?

Answer:

Inspiring the next generation to pursue careers in STEM is a fundamental obligation of NASA. Programs like Space Grant help turn that inspiration into action by providing hands-on opportunities, academic support, and real pathways into the workforce. If confirmed, I would strongly support efforts that connect students to NASA's mission and help develop the talent needed to lead in space, science, and innovation.