

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Full Committee
Nomination Hearing
Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Matthew Anderson

COVER PAGE

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

NASA's Budget. Last year, this Administration proposed cutting NASA's budget by a quarter and its science funding by nearly half. Fortunately, Congress came together on a bipartisan basis to reject these dangerous cuts and passed a law maintaining NASA's funding levels in FY2026. However, recent reports indicate that OMB is still withholding money from NASA's science mission for no legitimate reason. This is precisely the concern that NASA whistleblowers raised with my office last year, and it's unacceptable.

Question 1: Yes or No: Will you commit to fully implementing the funding levels Congress has set for NASA in 2026 and beyond?

Answer: Yes

Question 2: Yes or No: Do you believe if Congress authorizes and appropriates funds, that NASA must implement those funds as Congress intended?

Answer: Yes

NASA Reauthorization. In the past week, this Committee passed the NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026, following years of development. This comprehensive Senate bill implements key recommendations from the recently issued Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel (ASAP) Report for how NASA can better oversee its contractors, and avoid situations like that which led to the Starliner Crewed Test Flight Mishap in 2024.

Question 1: What changes do you think the agency needs to make to its contracting methods to allow for sufficient insight into the work being done by contractors so that NASA can certify that the spacecraft it uses meets its safety standards?

Answer: As a nominee, I am not privileged of the full details of NASA's current contracting and oversight practices. However, efforts involving high-risk or safety-critical systems should always be supported by independent technical authority that is insulated from cost and schedule pressures.

I appreciate the Committee's work on the NASA Reauthorization Act and the recommendations from ASAP. If confirmed, I look forward to working with this Committee on those recommendations. In addition, I will reinforce the culture of safety, accountability, and transparency that Administrator Isaacman has recently outlined to NASA, as well as the American public.

Question 2: Once we have returned to the moon, do you agree that the United States should establish a sustainable permanent presence as a matter of importance to economic and national security?

Answer: Yes

ASAP Report and Workforce Plans. NASA has historically played a key role in developing safety technologies and capabilities later used by the FAA, which is why I am particularly concerned about NASA's recent ASAP Report.

The Report found that NASA’s “unprecedented wave of personnel departures” during this Administration harmed institutional knowledge and technical expertise, putting the ability to complete the Artemis missions safely in jeopardy.

Question 1: I understand you have already met some of NASA’s workforce. Will you be an advocate for the workforce to ensure more talent is not lost?

Answer: It would be an honor to serve alongside the most talented workforce in the federal government. To maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration and science, NASA must maintain strong in-house engineering, operational, and scientific capabilities and preserve the technical expertise needed to safely oversee and execute its missions. If confirmed, I will work to implement the recent workforce directives set by Administrator Isaacman to rebuild internal talent, strengthen contractual provisions, and foster a culture of technical resilience.

Question 2: Will you commit to maintaining NASA’s focus on prioritizing the safety of our astronauts, the Artemis missions, and aeronautics broadly?

Answer: Yes

ASAP Report and Contracting Methods. The recent NASA PIT Report classified the 2024 Starliner Crewed Test Flight as a Type-A Mishap – the highest level of severity. The 2025 ASAP Report found that a contributing factor to the mishap was that “NASA relied on contractor systems as a substitute for Government inspection and testing even though no comparable commercial human spaceflight product or market existed at the time of direction to justify that approach.” The report made several recommendations for how NASA can better oversee its contractors and avoid situations like that which led to the Starliner mishap.

Question 1: What changes do you think the agency needs to make to its contracting methods to allow for sufficient insight into the work being done by contractors so that NASA can certify that the spacecraft it uses meet its safety standards?

Answer: If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Administrator and this Committee to ensure NASA’s acquisition practices appropriately balance commercial partnership with the government insight needed for safe and successful missions.

Question 2: What role do you see for NASA in ensuring that purely commercial activities in space, especially those involving humans, receive both support and appropriate oversight from the federal government?

Answer: If confirmed, I will work with the Administrator and this Committee to ensure commercial human spaceflight receives appropriate support and oversight while maintaining the highest standards of safety.

ASAP Report and ISS-CLD Transition. Additionally, the 2025 ASAP Report recommended that the agency develop a “comprehensive understanding of the resources and timelines of the ISS-to-CLD transition plan to a much higher level of fidelity, to provide confidence that the Nation will be able to sustain a continuous human presence in LEO.” The NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026 which passed out of Committee on March 4th, requires a coordinated transition between the

ISS and commercial space stations and sets a firm deadline for issuing final requirements for these commercial destinations, mandating that it occur within 90 days of enactment.

Question 1: Absent this bill becoming law, how will you ensure that CLD requirements are issued in a timely manner to avoid a gap in continuous presence in low Earth orbit and ensure that commercial destinations have the direction and support from NASA to be successful?

Answer: It is essential that the United States protect its interests in LEO. If confirmed, I will assist the Administrator in prioritizing this effort and a seamless transition that does not have a gap in human presence or purpose in low-earth orbit.

Question 2: How can the agency better utilize commercial solutions for increasing down mass capability of ISS and future commercial space station payloads?

Answer: NASA has a strong history of partnering with industry to develop crew and cargo services. If confirmed, I will support continued engagement with industry and assess how commercial services could help meet NASA's needs for the ISS and CLDs.

NASA's Role in Developing Aviation Technology. NASA's research has played a pivotal role in advancing the aviation industry, driving innovations that and capabilities later used by the FAA enhance both safety and cost-efficiency within the National Airspace System (NAS).

Examples include the System-Wide Safety (SWS) project, where NASA has conducted research to understand how the modernization of industry and aircraft can affect overall safety, and is developing an In-Time Aviation Safety Management System (IASMS) to address operational risks and hazards of a transformed NAS.

Question 1: Will you commit to maintaining NASA's focus on leading edge technologies that will improve the safety of aviation and the NAS?

Answer: Yes

Question 2: As we look to the future, what specific actions will you take to further support and accelerate NASA's efforts in developing next-generation commercial aviation technologies?

Answer: As a retired Air Force pilot, I have nearly 5,000 flight hours in five different aircraft. Aviation and aerospace have been my career and a lifelong passion. NASA aeronautics research has delivered numerous breakthroughs that have directly shaped modern commercial aviation in addition to military aviation advancements like the F-22 and B2.

If confirmed, I look forward to prioritizing efforts to develop next-generation commercial aviation technologies and strengthening collaboration with industry, academia, and federal partners such as the Federal Aviation Administration. This also includes leveraging facilities and collaborations such as the American Aerospace Materials Manufacturing Center (AAMMC) as well as initiatives like HiCAM that help mature advanced manufacturing capabilities for next-generation aerospace systems.

SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN)

STEM Workforce

I have long supported programs that train students in science, technology, engineering, and math programs to equip them to be our next space pioneers. **If confirmed, how will you work to promote the STEM workforce our country needs to compete globally?**

- A strong and talented workforce is vital to the United States remaining the global leader in space. NASA's bold missions are the ultimate motivator. From the Artemis program to the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, these missions will inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers. NASA must work with industry and academia to strengthen the talent pipeline and ensure we have a workforce capable of delivering world-changing missions for generations to come.

Biomedical Breakthroughs in Space

We are on the precipice of truly incredible breakthroughs in microgravity that could transform the pharmaceutical and biotech industries. Researchers from the Mayo Clinic have identified important research projects in the fields of aging and regenerative medicine to conduct in the micro-gravity environment of space.

If confirmed, will you continue to support NASA and institutions like Mayo in their efforts to advance medical innovation using the micro-gravity environment of space? Yes

NASA Research and Earth Science Funding

In addition to NASA's work on space exploration, the agency is a world leader in climate studies and Earth science by providing the necessary scientific data needed to monitor atmosphere, land, ice, and ocean changes.

If confirmed, how will you work to help advance American leadership in Earth science?

- NASA's Earth science programs are a core part of the Agency's mission. These missions support farmers and ranchers through improved ag forecasting, help communities prepare for and respond to extreme weather, and contribute to our national and economic security. If confirmed, I look forward to supporting NASA's Earth science programs that provide reliable data and insight and strengthen partnerships with other federal agencies including national security departments.

What steps should NASA take to build up its research capacity, including by recruiting new talent to the agency?

- If confirmed, I will work to recruit and deploy the nation's top talent to support the Agency. To maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration and science, NASA must restore and retain in-house engineering, operational, and scientific excellence, and reclaim technical autonomy. The recent workforce directive set by Administrator Isaacman establishes actions to rebuild internal talent, strengthen contractual provisions, and foster a culture of technical resilience.

SENATOR GARY PETERS (D-MI)

1. NASA recently announced a workforce directive to rebuild key competencies in the civil servant workforce. However, I think it is important to note this administration's aggressive and haphazard reductions in staffing helped decimate that workforce.

NASA's Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel has since warned that the loss in expertise jeopardizes NASA's ability to properly manage major programs – like Artemis – and poses a safety risk. These reductions have also impacted morale.

Mr. Anderson, how do you plan to support the effort to rebuild NASA's workforce at a time when people no longer believe that a job with the federal government will provide long-term stability?

It would be an honor to serve alongside the most talented workforce in the federal government. To maintain U.S. leadership in space exploration and science, NASA must maintain strong in-house engineering, operational, and scientific capabilities and preserve the technical expertise needed to safely oversee and execute its missions. If confirmed, I will work to implement the recent workforce directives set by Administrator Isaacman to rebuild internal talent, strengthen contractual provisions, and foster a culture of technical resilience.

2. Last year the Office of Management and Budget attempted to force NASA to comply with the president's budget request by making cuts without approval from Congress. That budget included a 47% cut for the Science Mission Directorate. Now we are hearing reports that OMB is withholding money from NASA's science missions.

Mr. Anderson, do you agree that the power of the purse rests with Congress? How are you planning to confront efforts by this administration to undermine the Congressionally approved budget for NASA?

Yes, the power of the purse rests with Congress. If confirmed, I will always follow the law.

3. Administrator Isaacman has repeatedly indicated that NASA fulfilling its exploration mission will be inspiration enough for the next generation. While I agree that NASA's work is inspiring, I believe that we need concrete investments into STEM education to ensure that we are providing opportunities to those that have been inspired by NASA's work.

President Trump's FY26 budget proposed zeroing out the budget for NASA's Office of STEM Engagement – something Congress blocked. A failure to invest in the next generation hamstring U.S. competitiveness and makes it difficult to build on the work we have already invested billions in.

Mr. Anderson, if confirmed, are you committed to supporting investments into NASA's STEM education programming? Do you agree that it is important for NASA to fund

science and workforce initiatives that ultimately support their exploration accounts?

A strong and talented workforce is vital to the United States remaining the global leader in space. NASA's bold missions are the ultimate motivator. From the Artemis program to the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, these missions will inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers. NASA must work with industry and academia to strengthen the talent pipeline and ensure we have a workforce capable of delivering world-changing missions for generations to come.

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

Q1. The Office of Management and Budget is withholding science funding that this Congress appropriated and explicitly reinforced in our Joint Explanatory Statement. These programs are not peripheral – they are central to America’s leadership in space and Earth science. They underpin climate resilience, planetary defense, space weather forecasting, and the search for life beyond Earth. At the same time, they drive technological innovation, strengthen our aerospace workforce, sharpen our competitive edge, and inspire the next generation to enter STEM fields and serve this nation. NASA’s leaders have a responsibility not only to manage programs, but to advocate for them, to defend the workforce, the missions, and the congressional intent behind duly enacted appropriations. **Will you execute the funds appropriated by Congress for NASA’s critical science missions, exactly as Congress has directed? Can you speak to how you will fight for your people, your agency, and these critical science programs?**

- I will always follow the law.

Q2. New Mexico has a robust and growing space economy, with companies that partner closely with both NASA and the Space Force to advance exploration and national defense capabilities. One persistent challenge I hear is the lag between congressional authorization and NASA actually getting proposal calls and funding out the door. A specific example: Congress directed NASA to award a contract for a Mars Telecommunications Orbiter by September 30, 2026, with spacecraft delivery by December 31, 2028, backed by \$700 million in funding. It has now been eight months since enactment, and NASA has only recently published draft objectives and requirements, with a full Request for Proposals still not released. That timeline leaves industry with an increasingly narrow window to respond, compete, and perform, and it raises serious questions about whether NASA can meet the statutory contract award deadline. This isn't an isolated case. Delays in RFP releases and provider selection dates are a pattern that affects the entire commercial space ecosystem. **If confirmed, will you commit to personally reviewing the status of the MTO procurement, and more broadly, to establishing accountability mechanisms that ensure NASA meets congressionally mandated solicitation and selection timelines?**

- If confirmed, I commit to reviewing the status of the MTO procurement and to better understanding how NASA manages solicitations and why there may be delays and how I can help fix that.

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

NASA: Orbital Debris

There are over 1 million pieces of dangerous space debris in space today traveling at speeds faster than a bullet. The U.S. Senate has unanimously passed the Orbital Sustainability (ORBITS) Act in the 117th and 118th Congresses, respectively. The ORBITS Act takes a whole of government approach to modernize coordination and accelerate scientific innovation to mitigate space debris and protect U.S. astronauts, satellites, and spacecraft from collisions with space debris. The ORBITS Act notably requires NASA to initiate a demonstration program to prove the effectiveness of active debris remediation technologies. The United States' allies in Japan, England, and across Europe are each carrying out their own missions to remediate space debris.

Question 1: Mr. Anderson, do you believe it is a strategic imperative for the U.S., through NASA, to develop and demonstrate our own space debris remediation capability?

Yes

Question 2: In general, would you agree with the potential benefit of active debris remediation as a dual-use technology capable of augmenting our national security capabilities?

Orbital debris poses a direct and growing threat to satellites, spacecraft, astronauts, the ISS, and the broader commercial and military space infrastructure. I agree that active debris remediation technologies hold potential as dual-use capabilities that can enhance both civilian space sustainability and our national security.

Question 3: If confirmed, will you work with us to expeditiously implement the ORBITS Act should it become law?

As a nominee, I can't comment on pending legislation. However, I will always follow the law.

NASA: Civil and Defense Collaboration

Mr. Anderson, we are so proud to see a Coloradan nominated to a leadership position at NASA.

As we discussed this week, NASA has the power to inspire students to STEM careers, promote international collaboration in space exploration, and enhance our national security objectives. Given your background in the U.S. Air Force, you are keenly aware of the robust civil, commercial, and national security expertise Colorado's aerospace industry brings to the table.

Question 4: Mr. Anderson, could you please describe how you believe NASA could strengthen its collaborations with the U.S. Space Force?

NASA and the U.S. Space Force benefit from the exchange of technical expertise, operational experience, and research capabilities. If confirmed, I will use my experience in the Air Force and the Space Force Association to strengthen coordination in areas such as space domain awareness, launch capabilities, physical infrastructure, technology development, and the resilience of critical space infrastructure.

NASA: STEM Education and Workforce

Mr. Anderson, last year, the Administration's budget request zeroed out the Office of STEM Engagement. It also proposed a 47% cut to NASA Science that would have led to the cancellation of over 40 important missions. Congress ultimately restored the funding for STEM programs at NASA. But I know that you are aware of how imperative the STEM workforce pipeline is.

As a Coloradan, you know that in Colorado, our aerospace industry is only as strong as the engineers, scientists, technicians, and innovators that we graduate today!

Question 5: Mr. Anderson, how do you plan to support STEM initiatives and support the Office of STEM Engagement in this role, to ensure the success of Colorado and the leadership of our country in space exploration?

A strong and talented workforce is vital to the United States remaining the global leader in space. NASA's bold missions are the ultimate motivator. From the Artemis program to the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, these missions will inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers. NASA must work with industry and academia to strengthen the talent pipeline and ensure the Agency has a workforce capable of delivering world-changing missions for generations to come. If confirmed, I look forward to joining Sen. Hickenlooper at the University of Colorado and other educational institutions across the state to inspire students and discuss the new Golden Age of science and discovery.

NASA: Earth Observations

NASA's Commercial Satellite Data Acquisition Program is distinct and has successfully demonstrated how the government can save taxpayer dollars by taking advantage of private-sector innovation. These efforts have laid important groundwork, and the NASA Reauthorization Act will of course continue to allow public-private partnerships to improve and optimize the Federal government's work in this regard. We have passed the bipartisan *Accessing Satellite Capabilities to Enable New Discoveries (ASCEND) Act* unanimously through the Senate to codify NASA's CSDA Program. And as you know Colorado is front and center in private sector weather forecasting and weather satellite advancements for the US. It's a vital economic driver for our state and others.

Question 6: How will you engage the burgeoning private sector, through commercial data acquisition, and otherwise, and do so in a manner that both enhances value to the public at large while protecting the commercial sector's proprietary investments?

NASA's CSDA Program has demonstrated how the agency can leverage private-sector innovation while complementing NASA's own Earth science missions. If confirmed, I will continue to support these partnerships in close coordination with this Committee, industry, and stakeholders to strengthen America's leadership in Earth science and the growing space economy.

NASA: Lunar Terrain Vehicle Services

NASA is expected to down select from the three Phase 1 winners and award demonstration missions under Phase 2 of the program. This decision was initially expected by November of 2025 but as of March 2026 it has still not been made. Given the Administrator's recent announcement that Artemis V is now planned for 2028, the mission expected to fly the first LTV, further delays risk technical feasibility and cost. Human landings on the Moon without a mobility capability like LTVS minimizes what each mission can accomplish.

Question 7: Do you believe that swiftly finalizing the award of Phase 2 of the LTVS program should be a priority for NASA?

As a nominee, I am not privileged of the full details of NASA's current LTVS decision and/or announcement. However, if confirmed, I commit to briefing Sen. Hickenlooper and this Committee on the status of the LTVS program.

Question 8: Upon your confirmation, will you commit to briefing this Committee on the status of the LTVS program?

Yes

NASA: Neo-Earth Objects (NEO) Missions

The CHIPS & Science Act directed NASA to continue development and deployment of the NEO Surveyor mission and to report annually on Planetary Defense Coordination Office activities. Given the growing importance of planetary defense and the increasing discovery rate of potentially hazardous Near-Earth Objects, it is prudent for this Committee to receive a timely assessment from NASA on the feasibility, cost, timeline, and technical requirements of a mission demonstrating rapid-response reconnaissance capability for near-Earth objects (NEO).

Question 9: Will you commit to providing our Committee a timely briefing on the feasibility, cost, timeline, financial, and technical requirements needed for a rapid-response reconnaissance capability for NEO?

Yes