

**Ranking Member Maria Cantwell Opening Remarks**  
**Artemis II Astronauts Meeting**  
**May 12, 2026**  
[\[VIDEO\]](#)

**Sen. Cantwell:** Thank you, Sen. Cruz. I think that accent needs a little bit of work. I want to thank my other colleagues who are joining us: Senator Gary Peters, Senator Markey, Senator Kim, Senator Blunt Rochester, and Senator Klobuchar. I actually think the Administrator should come up and join us. Come on up — I'm very, very proud of your leadership in this mission.

I'm thrilled to welcome the crew of Artemis II to this important hearing room, where we try to do policy that helps empower the Artemis mission. Commander Reid Weisman, Pilot Victor Glover, Mission Specialist Christina Koch and Canadian Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen we are so thrilled that you are here with us today.

We're here to honor you and your travel around the moon, farther from Earth than any human before, in their vehicle, aptly named Integrity. I had the opportunity to speak with them during the mission and was especially moved by Victor's insights into the value of human perspective in space exploration. Human space flight turns exploration into a shared national and civilization event, and the world watched as Artemis II, and the people who are on board, inspired a new generation of Americans.

The crew's impressive accomplishment was made possible through the efforts of more than 2,700 companies across the United States, including 41 from the State of Washington. Yes, there is a reason we are known for the Space Needle. Among the contributions -- Washington companies built the thrusters for the Orion vehicle and the parachute deployment technologies for the splashdown. And I had a chance to visit these companies [before] you were on your mission and take a look at this technology. So I invite you all to come to Seattle.

In the Senate, our colleagues and the people on this committee have worked hard to ensure that NASA has the direction and resources on this bold, ambitious program that will open access to the moon as a platform for exploration, science, and economic development. I want to thank Senator Cruz for his leadership. Our NASA Reauthorization Act of 2026 calls for the establishment of a sustained lunar base. The Artemis mission laid down the foundation for that endeavor by proving that our deep space transportation system actually works with a crew on board.

I want to thank Administrator Isaacman for calling that shot and making sure that we got this particular mission under control to make those tests a reality. The fact that this bill passed out of this Committee with unanimous support shows how much the U.S. [Congress] is invested in space.

But most importantly, we saw that with the success of the Artemis II mission, we inspired not only a generation to think differently about the grandeur of the scale in the future, but we saw a world looking in on the United States and the accomplishments in science that we have achieved.

Thank you again to the Artemis crew for joining us today, thank you for the space exploration, and thank you for [your] leadership [to] the United States of America and Canada.