SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Full Committee
Nomination Hearing
Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at 10:30 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Joshua Shoemaker

COVER PAGE

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

NASA Workforce. NASA's expert workforce is critical to the success of its science and exploration missions, yet in 2025 NASA lost roughly 4,000 civil servants to the Administration's RIFs and voluntary separation programs.

The Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel's (ASAP) 2025 report said these departures constitute "a substantial risk and safety concern."

It is also unclear that new hiring programs such as "NASA Force" and the insourcing of contractors with critical skillsets fully address the Agency's needs or concerns regarding safety, transparency, and further talent loss.

Question 1: If confirmed, will you commit to supporting the restoration of NASA's workforce, preventing loss of skilled personnel, and maintaining safety?

Answer: **Yes.**

Question 2: Will you commit to providing regular budget data to the Committee that includes details regarding human capital and hiring needs?

Answer: **I commit to complying with requests from the Committee.**

Administrator Isaacman has directed NASA to convert contractors to civil servant roles to in-house "core capabilities" citing roughly $1 billion in overhead from the contractor workforce.

Question 3: If confirmed, how would you validate that cost-savings estimate?

Answer: **I would establish a baseline and compare the annual cost difference using consistent methodologies.**

Question 4: Do you have any concerns that NASA can offer compensation that is sufficiently competitive to retain experienced individuals who have been serving NASA as contractors?

Answer: **Mitigation should focus on roles that are mission critical and not replicated in the private sector, maximizing use of existing pay flexibilities, strengthening non-pay factors, and tracking acceptance and retention rates.**

Ensuring Dissimilar Redundancy and Competition via NASA Agreements. NASA increasingly relies on commercial services for acquiring key capabilities. This model has benefits but also carries risks to U.S. goals and missions if redundancy and competition are not maintained.

With SpaceX planning to discontinue Falcon 9 and Crew Dragon spacecraft services within a few years, NASA is left to lean on a single commercial provider in the critical area of providing astronaut transportation to the space station.

Question 1: If confirmed, will you work with the Committee to ensure sufficient redundancy and competition for critical NASA capabilities?

Answer: **Yes.**

Question 2. What specific oversight mechanisms, reviews, and financial controls will you implement to provide transparency into how agency funds support development and certification

of capabilities provided by contractors? What commitments should the agency be securing when procuring services using firm-fixed price contracts?

Answer: **As NASA CFO, I would implement layered oversight mechanisms, independent reviews, and financial controls focused on milestone verification, cost realism, and transparent reporting so that NASA funds supporting contractor development and certification are tied to verifiable progress rather than schedule optimism or unverified claims.**

For firm-fixed price contracts, NASA should secure clear, enforceable commitments on performance definition, verification, risk allocation, data and insight rights, and termination and continuity protections.

NASA Science Budget & Spending. The White House Fiscal Year 26 and Fiscal Year 27 budget requests proposed nearly 50% cuts to the Science Mission Directorate, undermining NASA's position as a premier science agency.

The science community has expressed concerns with the planning and execution of NASA's science budget, including potentially premature enforcement of the draft OMB rule concerning science grant funding and irregularities with NASA's annual Research Opportunities in Space and Earth Science (ROSES) solicitation process.

Question 1: Does the agency commit to delivering spend plans to Congress and the public in a timely manner? In those spend plans, do you commit to providing details specific enough to include Research and Analysis and the flagship science missions?

Answer: **Yes.**

Question 2: With NASA moving from ROSES-25 to ROSES-27, will the agency provide the Committee a written accounting of how much FY26 Science funding it planned to use for ROSES, how much was obligated for awards, how much remains unobligated, whether any was redirected to other activities, and whether additional internal approvals contributed to delays in funding ROSES-25 selections?

Answer: **Yes.**

Question 3. Do you commit to ensuring that the Science Mission Directorate budget formation and execution supports a balanced portfolio of small, medium, and large missions in a manner that strategically maximizes the scientific return for taxpayer investment?

Answer: **Yes.**

Federal Budget and Appropriations. As detailed in the Committee's 2025 Whistleblower Report, the agency appeared to have taken actions that implemented components of the FY26 President's Budget Request (PBR) ahead of congress finalizing formal appropriations. A House Science Committee report covering the same topic found that this included the NASA Aeronautics Electrified Powertrain Flight Demonstrator (EPFD) program being effectively shut down and then restarted with only one of the participants being supported through flight demonstration. This disruption prevented the agency and impacted provider from obtaining the

data that would secure the return on tens of millions in taxpayer investment, hindering the advancement of electric aviation technologies.

Question 1: If confirmed, how would you direct the agency to proceed under a continuing resolution? Would you commit to operating from the lowest of the Senate and House appropriations marks as has been precedent?

Answer: **I will follow the law as enacted by Congress.**

Question 2: Before effectively cancelling programs or projects, do you commit to conducting a thorough assessment of how potential cost savings comport with maximizing the return on the funds invested?

Answer: **Yes.**

Large Program Management. NASA runs ambitious multi-billion-dollar multiyear programs that often face cost and schedule challenges. The agency is currently managing the Artemis program and maintaining operations on the ISS in low-Earth orbit and preparing to transition to commercial space stations. Meanwhile, the agency is taking preliminary steps to establish a Moon Base, to support a sustained U.S. presence on the lunar surface.

Question 1: What improvements need to be made to existing internal and independent cost estimating and cost assessment processes?

Answer: **If confirmed I would further address the NASA OIG recommendations related to Title 51 compliance on cost classification, mission-level baselines, interdependency risk analysis, and policy alignment and the related GAO recommendation for fuller Artemis life-cycle estimates.**

SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN)

Since 2025, NASA has lost roughly 4,000 of its personnel from separation programs and organizational reshaping.

- If confirmed, how would you address the ongoing workforce shortage?

Response: **If confirmed, I will work with leadership at NASA through disciplined resource allocation, full-cost transparency, and support for the Administrator's core-competency rebuilding efforts.**

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN (D-WI)

1. If confirmed, will you commit to working across the agency's departments to ensure that grant funding gets out the door in a timely manner?

   Response: **Yes.**

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

(1) The Commerce Committee released a report that found that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) directed NASA to make cuts to the science mission directorate, in clear violation of the Constitution and without regard for the impacts on NASA's science missions and workforce. **If confirmed as NASA's CFO, will you follow the law and ensure that funds appropriated by Congress for NASA's critical science missions are executed exactly as Congress has directed?**

Response: **Yes.**

(2) The NASA Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for overseeing the agency's financial management, budget development, strategic planning, and financial reporting. NASA is the largest government space agency in the world, dedicated to civilian space exploration, scientific research and aeronautics development, with an annual budget of $24 billion. The range of core missions and programs include human space flight for operations like the Artemis campaign, robotic exploration, earth and planetary sciences, and developing next generation aviation and propulsions systems. While you have 20 years as a business owner and accountant in the private sector, you have spent only a few years in the US government being an auditor with the OIG at the US Election Assistance Commission (EAC) and have been at NASA for barely 3 months. **Besides a background in accounting, what makes you qualified to be CFO over a world leading, multibillion dollar Space Agency with a science and technology directorate?**

Response: **The CFO must deliver clean financial statements and compliance while also providing an independent financial voice on resource allocation and program performance. I would bring my experience in governmental accounting, federal compliance, internal controls, and financial operations and draw on NASA's career budget professionals and technical authorities. I would be accountable for integrating that expertise into sound decisions.**

(3) In August 2026, President Trump outlined an ambitious vision for U.S. space exploration that included not only a government lunar base but also permanent American settlements on the Moon, with NASA involvement but with the private sector playing a leading role. **Which future would enable NASA to pursue its scientific and engineering goals more economically: a government-led lunar base with limited commercial participation, or a settlement-focused strategy that develops lunar resources and commercial opportunities to generate prosperity for the American people?**

Response: **NASA's technological and institutional capabilities are not yet fully replicated in the commercial sector today. A NASA-led Moon Base with commercial and international partners is the appropriate first step because it supplies the demand, risk reduction, and foundational capabilities that the private sector cannot yet provide on its own.**

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

NASA Orbital Debris

There are approximately 8,000 metric tons of junk currently in low earth orbit. This includes 900,000 individual pieces of debris. This debris can move at speeds of up to 17,896 miles per hour. Due to its volume and speed, the debris can be hazardous to NASA's approximately 16,885 operational satellites currently in orbit.

These satellites, and their continued, reliable operation are vital for every single American, as well as for the American economy. They serve key functions such as real-time navigation, the monitoring and mitigation of disasters like wildfires, and supporting precision agriculture that enables farmers to precisely manage their crop irrigation to survive historic droughts. Given how critical these functions are for everyday Americans, it is important that NASA manages the risk through active debris remediation.

The Commerce Committee has worked on a bipartisan basis to advance our Orbital Sustainability (ORBITS) Act, which would require NASA to research, develop, and demonstrate technologies in space to remediate space debris.

Question 1: **Mr. Shoemaker**, if NASA is authorized to pursue a program for active debris remediation, and if you are confirmed, what specific steps will you take to ensure active debris remediation programs get the resources they need?

Response: **If confirmed, I would treat an authorized active debris remediation program as a formal, resourced element of the agency's portfolio. I would apply standard CFO controls to protect its funding and execution.**

Question 2: **Mr. Shoemaker**, do you commit to working with Congress to appropriately fund active debris remediation activities?

Response: **Yes.**