U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation
Nomination Hearing for Robert H. Steinau to be Inspector General of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
November 10, 2026

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and distinguished members of the Committee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today as President Trump's nominee for Inspector General of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

I believe deeply in NASA's mission, and I know that extraordinary ambition demands aggressive oversight. As we race back to the Moon and usher in the Golden Age of discovery, ensuring integrity, transparency, and accountability has never been more important. Fulfilling this mandate and leading the Office of Inspector General (OIG) would be the honor of a lifetime. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to provide timely, independent, and rigorous reviews of NASA programs.

Before I go any further, I want to recognize the people who mean the most to me. My wife Brooke, my daughter McKenna, my son Hunter, and his wife Katie are all here today. I am thankful for their steadfast support and shared sacrifice throughout a career that has taken me across the nation and around the globe in service to our country.

I also want to recognize the dedicated members of NASA OIG. For the last 17 years, I've had the immense privilege of working alongside these talented, hardworking individuals. I am especially grateful to Kate Sheehey, who has led the office in my stead since my nomination in September. I am humbled to represent my colleagues and look forward to discussing the exciting work ahead.

Growing up in Ohio, my first lessons in grit came from my father, who worked in a chemical factory his entire life. I enlisted in the Marine Corps and later paid my way through the University of Cincinnati by working multiple jobs and serving in the Reserves. I was the first in my family to attend college. I didn't know it at the time, but that accounting degree set me on a trajectory that has since defined my career: analysis and fact-finding in pursuit of the truth.

My first federal civilian job was with the United States Secret Service. I began as a GS-5 and gradually worked my way up over the course of a decade. I specialized in financial crime investigations and helped to advance the Electronic Crimes Special Agent Program. This work ultimately brought me to Washington, DC, where I developed a network intrusion curriculum at the Secret Service Headquarters and served on the Vice Presidential Protective Division.

I joined NASA OIG in 2009 because I wanted to work with one of the world's premier cybercrime investigation units. My team hunted down international hackers, dismantled financial fraud schemes, and defended the networks that power America's space program. To stay ahead of evolving threats, I partnered with our auditors to establish the OIG's first data analytics group, elevating how we identify and mitigate risk.

Later, I became the Assistant Inspector General for Investigations, followed by the Acting Assistant Inspector General for Management and—in December 2024—the Senior Official Performing the Duties of Inspector General. Through these management roles, I've gained a comprehensive view of the organization and its many facets. Today, I bring extensive knowledge of NASA's operations, its workforce, its contracting environment, and the unique oversight challenges that come with executing complex scientific, aeronautics, and human spaceflight missions.

NASA is a $24.4 billion enterprise, supporting roughly 60,000 employees and contractors, over $1 billion in annual research awards, and a nationwide network of sprawling infrastructure and facilities. An operation of this magnitude merits exacting oversight—not just to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently, but to safeguard American innovation and defend national security. In the last 3 years alone, the OIG's audits and investigations have generated a monetary impact of over $300 million.

If confirmed, I will build on these successes by maximizing impact and minimizing waste. I will direct the OIG's limited resources where they matter most: toward the programs that pose the greatest financial, operational, and security risks to NASA and the American taxpayer. Through our work, I will also ensure NASA remains committed to realistic schedules, adequate budget resources, and transparent reporting across its mission portfolio. This means focusing our oversight on three critical challenges facing the Agency.

First, NASA aims to establish a sustained human presence on the Moon. Earlier this year, we watched in awe as four brave astronauts journeyed farther than anyone has gone before, completing the first crewed test flight around the Moon in over half a century. To maintain America's dominance in space, we must win the second space race and be the first to build a permanent lunar outpost. But the path to success is not without obstacles. NASA and its partners are working to develop state-of-the-art landers to ferry our astronauts, finish the next-generation spacesuits that will protect them, and solidify a reliable supply chain to deliver science and supplies. Above all, safety is paramount. Our audits have meticulously tracked these initiatives, and we will continue to evaluate key aspects of the Artemis campaign as we return to the Moon and take our next giant leap to Mars.

Second, NASA aims to manage and maintain a robust presence in low Earth orbit (LEO). For almost three decades, humans have continuously lived and worked aboard a massive laboratory circling 250 miles above our planet. Since its inception, the International Space Station has served as both a proving ground for cutting-edge science and a hub for commercial innovation. As the Station's retirement approaches, NASA is working to sustain safe operations and simultaneously lay the groundwork for future LEO destinations. The success of this dual mission requires reliable transportation capabilities to carry supplies, science, and astronauts between Earth and the Station. While NASA has contracted private U.S. companies to supply these services, ongoing development delays and dependence on a single launch provider present persistent challenges. The OIG will continue to oversee this pivotal transition, identifying ways to maximize the Station's final years and resolve launch bottlenecks.

Third, NASA aims to sustain critical operations and fortify its cyber defenses. America's space and aeronautics programs depend on a highly skilled workforce, specialized facilities, sophisticated information technology systems, and an extensive network of external partners. Any fracture in this foundation puts the entire operation at risk. To maintain these capabilities, NASA must recruit and retain top talent, repair and upgrade its aging facilities, bolster its safeguards against evolving cyber threats, and ensure its research partners comply with strict security standards. The OIG will continue providing targeted recommendations to help the Agency strengthen, modernize, and protect its capabilities while fighting foreign adversaries who seek to undermine our competitive edge.

NASA is moving with urgency, and it's imperative that accountability keep pace with ambition. If confirmed, I will ensure our findings are delivered to the Agency and this Committee proactively and when they matter most. I am also committed to securing the future of the OIG by recruiting, developing, and empowering a new generation of oversight leaders. Together, we will accelerate toward the next great adventure with transparency, integrity, and unwavering excellence.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.