

## Senate passes NASA Transition Authorization Act

**February 17, 2017**

On February 17, the Senate unanimously passed the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Transition Authorization Act (S.442). The bill was introduced by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), and will provide stability for NASA to sustain and build upon its mission to advance NASA science and space exploration. The bill addresses many aspects of NASA's activities, with the exception of earth science.

The bill authorizes \$19.5 billion in total NASA funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, with \$5.5 billion directed to the NASA Science Mission Directorate. This funding, however, has yet to be appropriated. The current continuing resolution funds NASA at the FY2016 level of \$19.3 billion. The continuing resolution, however, does not apply to the Space Launch System, Orion, and Exploration Ground Systems programs, which, because they would suffer operations schedule issues without sustainable funding, are exempted from normal budgeting restrictions.

The bill directs NASA to report to Congress on how the Orion spacecraft may serve as a backup to move material to and from the International Space Station (ISS). S.442 directs NASA to expand upon and utilize private sector commercial systems to move astronauts between Earth and the ISS.

The House passed S.442 on March 7. President Trump signed it into law on March 20.

Sources: [Senate.gov](https://www.senate.gov), [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), [NASA.gov](https://www.nasa.gov)

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