119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1457

To maintain the rocket propulsion system testing capabilities necessary to achieve the goals of the human spaceflight exploration programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 10, 2025

Mr. WICKER introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

---

A BILL

To maintain the rocket propulsion system testing capabilities necessary to achieve the goals of the human spaceflight exploration programs of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Engine Testing for Exploration Act''.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ''Administrator'' means the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(2) GOVERNMENT ASTRONAUT.—The term ''government astronaut'' has the meaning given the term in section 50902 of title 51, United States Code.

(3) NASA.—The term ''NASA'' means the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

SEC. 3. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Rocket propulsion system testing is critical for the operation of the space launch system and of future rockets that will embark on deep space exploration, including crewed missions to the Moon.

(2) The NASA Stennis Space Center is the primary and largest rocket propulsion system testing and engineering facility for NASA.

(3) The NASA Stennis Engineering and Test Directorate provides unique ground-testing services for rocket propulsion systems.

(4) The existing infrastructure at the Stennis Space Center provides unique capabilities to test and evaluate rocket propulsion systems for space launch vehicles.

(5) Maintaining within NASA a strong core competency in the testing and evaluation of rocket propulsion systems and related technologies allows NASA to be an informed purchaser of competitively awarded commercial rocket engines.

(6) The commercial space industry is currently developing rocket propulsion systems and other space launch capabilities.

(7) Testing rocket propulsion systems reduces risk and improves safety of space launch vehicles.

SEC. 4. ROCKET PROPULSION SYSTEM TESTING.

(a) MAINTAINING ROCKET PROPULSION SYSTEM TESTING CAPABILITIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall—

(A) maintain the rocket propulsion system testing capabilities necessary to achieve the goals of the human spaceflight exploration programs of NASA; and

(B) ensure the continuity within NASA of the internal expertise necessary to test and evaluate rocket propulsion systems, including through partnerships with the private sector.

(2) ROLE OF STENNIS SPACE CENTER.—The rocket propulsion system testing programs of NASA

shall continue to be managed by the Stennis Space Center.

(b) BRIEFING.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall provide the appropriate committees of Congress with a briefing on NASA plans for—

(1) rocket propulsion system testing and evaluation for—

(A) missions in low-Earth orbit; and

(B) missions to be conducted in deep space; and

(2) future programs for rocket propulsion system testing for missions that use space launch vehicles certified for use by NASA for government astronauts.

○