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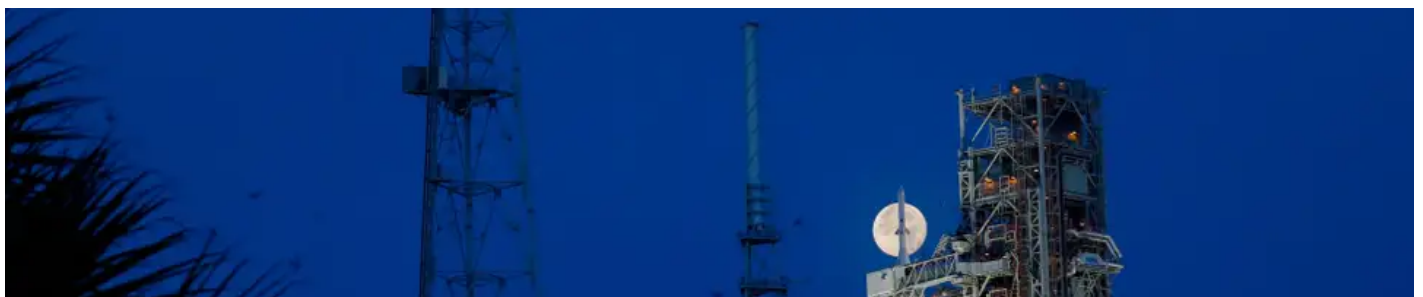


SPACEFLIGHT

# Congress Sneaks NASA Authorization Bill Into CHIPS, Approves Moon-to-Mars Program

It's the first authorization bill in over five years that also backs the space agency's Mars prospects, all while offering \$52 billion for semiconductors.

By **Kyle Barr** Published July 29, 2022 | [Comments \(4\)](#) | [Alerts](#)





Guess who came riding along with the passage of \$52 billion in incentives to manufacture semiconductors? Congress came in like a cowboy riding a rocket (think *Dr. Strangelove*), waving their new bill in the air that includes funding and provisions for NASA to continue its dreams of leaving bootprints on the surface of the Moon, and—eventually—Mars.

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The CHIPS+, AKA Chips and Science Act of 2022, was cleared by the House Thursday 243 to 187. It had previously [hurdled the Senate's filibuster bar](#) with a 64 to 33 vote earlier this week. This authorization effectively backs NASA's [Artemis](#)


efforts, of which the first of the program's SLS megarocket is expected to launch by earliest August 29, taking an Orion capsule on a trip to the moon and back.

The text of the new bill (go to page 980, it's a very long bill) also recommits the U.S.' participation in the International Space Station all the way to 2030. It had previously been authorized until September, 2024. That's an important sticking point in this time of international tension, since both China and Russia are building up their own stations in low-earth orbit. Russia's antagonism to working with the international space community came to a head this week when the new space chief threatened to leave the ISS in 2024. The agency backtracked Thursday and said they were committed to the station at least until 2028.

The last time Congress passed any big NASA funding was back in 2017 with the NASA Transition Authorization Act, giving the agency \$19.5 billion in funding while emphasizing public-private partnerships with commercial spaceflight companies alongside manned missions to Mars.

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Though unlike past authorization bills, this newest version doesn't include specific funding levels for the agency, but instead prescribes the agency to build a "Moon to Mars" office and program within the Exploration Systems Development Mission Directorate, which includes several existing initiatives surrounding the Artemis moon and Mars efforts. These include the Space Launch System, Orion crew vehicle, Exploration Ground Systems, and more.

The bill also tells NASA to finalize a capital fund study to promote increased use of NASA rocket propulsion infrastructure's use by other federal agencies.

In a [statement](#), NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said he was "incredibly pleased" lawmakers managed to pass the NASA Authorization Act, adding that the so-called "Artemis Generation — is part of a sustainable exploration program that will last decades."

Of course, lumping NASA funding to a bill about funding U.S. semiconductor manufacturing infrastructure does have the sense of lumping "all science and tech" stuff under one roof. The space agency provisions appeared July 20 after

negotiations in the Senate's Commerce Committee, though with support from the head of the House Science Committee, namely Texas Democrat Eddie Bernice Johnson, according to [SpaceNews](#).

The CHIPS+ bill, in the meantime, establishes a [\\$52 billion piggy bank](#) for U.S.-based semiconductor manufacturers, in an effort to beef up American capacity for computer chips. It's an effort to deal with the ongoing worldwide [chip shortage](#) and at the same time help the country compete against Asian chip giants found in Taiwan, South Korea, and China.

The bill also establishes tax credits and a separate fund to encourage investment and innovation in the U.S. chip industry. However, it could be a long while before we'll actually see the outcome of this bill, since it will take years for some of these companies to create the infrastructure needed. Intel's [anticipated \\$20 billion Ohio factory](#) may not be churning out consumer-grade chips until years down the line, according to [some analysts](#).

