SUBCHAPTER I—POLICY, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES FOR HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT AND EXPLORATION

§ 18311. United States human space flight policy

(a) Use of non-United States human space flight transportation capabilities

It is the policy of the United States that reliance upon and use of non-United States human space flight capabilities shall be undertaken only as a contingency in circumstances where no United States-owned and operated human space flight capability is available, operational, and certified for flight by appropriate Federal agencies.

(b) United States human space flight capabilities

Congress reaffirms the policy stated in section 70501(a) of title 51, that the United States shall maintain an uninterrupted capability for human space flight and operations in low-Earth orbit, and beyond, as an essential instrument of national security and of the capacity to ensure continued United States participation and leadership in the exploration and utilization of space.

(Pub. L. 111–267, title II, §201, Oct. 11, 2010, 124 Stat. 2811.)

CODIFICATION

In subsec. (b), ''section 70501(a) of title 51'' substituted for ''section 501(a) of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2005 (42 U.S.C. 16761(a))'' on authority of Pub. L. 111–314, §5(e), Dec. 18, 2010, 124 Stat. 3443, which Act enacted Title 51, National and Commercial Space Programs.

§ 18312. Goals and objectives

(a) Long term goal

The long term goal of the human space flight and exploration efforts of NASA shall be to expand permanent human presence beyond low-Earth orbit and to do so, where practical, in a manner involving international partners.

(b) Key objectives

The key objectives of the United States for human expansion into space shall be—

(1) to sustain the capability for long-duration presence in low-Earth orbit, initially through continuation of the ISS and full utilization of the United States segment of the ISS as a National Laboratory, and through assisting and enabling an expanded commercial presence in, and access to, low-Earth orbit, as elements of a low-Earth orbit infrastructure;

(2) to determine if humans can live in an extended manner in space with decreasing reliance on Earth, starting with utilization of low-Earth orbit infrastructure, to identify potential roles that space resources such as energy and materials may play, to meet national and global needs and challenges, such as potential cataclysmic threats, and to explore the viability of and lay the foundation for sustainable economic activities in space;

(3) to maximize the role that human exploration of space can play in advancing overall knowledge of the universe, supporting United States national and economic security and the United States global competitive posture, and inspiring young people in their educational pursuits; and

(4) to build upon the cooperative and mutually beneficial framework established by the ISS partnership agreements and experience in developing and undertaking programs and meeting objectives designed to realize the goal of human space flight set forth in subsection (a).

(Pub. L. 111–267, title II, §202, Oct. 11, 2010, 124 Stat. 2812.)

§ 18313. Assurance of core capabilities

(a) Sense of Congress

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the ISS, technology developments, the current Space Shuttle program, and follow-on transportation systems authorized by this chapter form the foundation of initial capabilities for missions beyond low-Earth orbit to a variety of lunar and Lagrangian orbital locations; and

(2) these initial missions and related capabilities should be utilized to provide operational experience, technology development, and the placement and assured use of in-space infrastructure and in-space servicing of existing and future assets.

(b) Space Shuttle capability assurance

(1) Development of follow-on space transportation systems

The Administrator shall proceed with the development of follow-on space transportation systems in a manner that ensures that the national capability to restart and fly Space Shuttle missions can be initiated if required by the Congress, in an Act enacted after October 11, 2010, or by a Presidential determination transmitted to the Congress, before the last Space Shuttle mission authorized by this chapter is completed.

(2) Required actions

In carrying out the requirement in paragraph (1), the Administrator shall authorize refurbishment of the manufactured external tank of the Space Shuttle, designated as ET–94, and take all actions necessary to enable its readiness for use in the Space Launch System development as a critical skills and capability retention effort or for test purposes, while preserving the ability to use this tank if needed for an ISS contingency if deemed necessary under paragraph (1).

(c) Sense of Congress regarding human space flight capability assurance

It is the sense of Congress that the Administrator shall proceed with the utilization of the ISS, technology development, and follow-on transportation systems (including the Space Launch System, multi-purpose crew vehicle, and commercial crew and cargo transportation capabilities) under subchapters II and III of this chapter in a manner that ensures—

(1) that these capabilities remain inherently complementary and interrelated;

(2) a balance of the development, sustainment, and use of each of these capabilities, which are of critical importance to the viabil-