

TALKING POINTS FOR ACTING ADMINISTRATOR ROBERT LIGHTFOOT
As Prepared
2017 ASTRONAUT CANDIDATES ANNOUNCEMENT
June 7, 2017

- It's wonderful to be here today as NASA does one of those iconic things we do – announcing a new class of astronauts.
- I want to welcome all 12 of you to the NASA family, and I want to thank your families as well for the support they have certainly given you to reach this point, and for sharing you with us and the nation. It's a very special group that all of you have just joined – both you and your loved ones.
- These new candidates are military service members. Physicians and pilots. Scientists and engineers. Women and men of all backgrounds.
- Their energy and accomplishments are going to fuel our future, and we couldn't be more excited about the talents and perspectives they're going to bring to our journey of discovery.
- I hope you all have a chance to read their bios online or to see the interviews we'll do with them tomorrow. They all have fascinating stories, and they're going to have even more amazing experiences as they walk the challenging and exhilarating path toward becoming an astronaut and then launching to space.
- Kids still look up at the sky and dream about the moon and the stars and the other planets that can sometimes be seen with the naked eye. And they dream of becoming astronauts. That's as much a dream today as it was when we first began recruiting people to break the bonds of gravity nearly 60 years ago.
- The talented women and men selected for the 2017 class of Astronaut Candidates represent the diversity of Americans and the variety of career paths that can lead to a place in America's astronaut corps.
- All told, there have been 338 astronauts since we announced the Mercury 7 in 1959. That's a pretty selective group, and from more than 18,300 applicants, you see this highly talented, amazing group today. We're going to build on that proud legacy.
- The entire NASA team is ready to support you and get you ready to do the amazing missions we have planned. We're going to destinations deeper in space. We're going to do even more great things aboard the International Space Station and take advantage of its full research potential, and we're going to work with industry to fly some amazing new systems to low-Earth orbit.

- Astronauts also support each other, both on Earth and in orbit. They demonstrate new technologies in space. And they help us understand the effects of long term exposure to microgravity and advance our knowledge so we can travel farther into the solar system and on to Mars.
- They inspire and educate and serve as ambassadors across this nation and throughout the world, and these new recruits are going to be vital to our mission.
- What you see before you today is the future.
- One of these people could be the one who provides the next iconic words the whole world listens to as they take the first steps on the surface of Mars in the footsteps of Neil Armstrong and the entire Apollo team.
- Working toward that next horizon goal is what drives us each day to utilize the space station to the fullest as a stepping stone to the rest of the solar system. It makes us work hard to help get our commercial partners flying our crews and to build and test the Space Launch System and Orion spacecraft and the ground systems that are the backbone and infrastructure of our ambitious exploration plans.
- It's a flexible, reusable and sustainable capability and infrastructure that will last multiple decades and support missions of increasing complexity. So, I think there will be plenty for all of you to do.
- As a group, you represent the pinnacle of American excellence. You're inspiring to us all, and, again, it's my great honor to welcome each of you to the NASA Family.
- I am so excited to follow all of your missions in the future.
- So, best of luck in the training ahead, warm congratulations, and Godspeed.
- It's my great pleasure now to introduce a very special guest with a keen interest in space. He's taking time out of his busy schedule, on his birthday no less, to congratulate and welcome you all.
- Please give a warm NASA welcome to the Vice President of the United States, the Honorable Mike Pence.