

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2026

Message on the 40th Anniversary of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* Disaster
January 28, 2026

On this day 40 years ago, America tragically lost 7 brilliant, visionary, and courageous titans of space exploration aboard the Space Shuttle *Challenger*. On this solemn anniversary, we acknowledge that their legacies will remain forever etched upon our Nation's memory, and we recommit to advancing mankind's journey beyond the stars with unwavering strength and an unyielding commitment to excellence.

On the morning of January 28, 1986, millions of Americans sat in anticipation as a historic launch unfolded on live television. Aboard the spacecraft were seven remarkable Americans: scientists, engineers, aviators, and a high school teacher chosen to help inspire the next generation of students. Just 73 seconds after liftoff, that anticipation was shattered when mechanical failures caused the shuttle to disintegrate into the cold morning air, transforming wonder and hope into devastation and disaster in a mere instant. Yet, from the smoke-filled sky rose a lasting resolve to honor these fallen American heroes by continuing their work and advancing the causes they cherished with greater care and unshakable purpose.

Every day, my administration is propelling their mission forward by unleashing the full force of American innovation and technology into the next era of space exploration. Last month, I signed an Executive order on ensuring American space superiority, which calls for a return to the Moon by 2028, lays the groundwork for a permanent American lunar presence, and will help make the United States the first nation to land an astronaut on Mars. Under my leadership, we are empowering innovation in the commercial space industry to increase capabilities and encourage a vibrant American space economy, because American leadership in space is crucial to America's strength, security, and future.

As we celebrate 250 years of American independence, this work is just the beginning of our next great chapter as we chart the course for a glorious American future in space.

On the day of this tragedy four decades ago, the great President Ronald Reagan declared: "The *Challenger* crew was pulling us into the future, and we will continue to follow them." Today, under my leadership, we will continue to abide by this promise, leading boldly on Earth and beyond, as we carry their lasting legacy into a new golden age of American exploration and discovery.

NOTE: The message referred to Executive Order 14369.

Categories: Letters and Messages : Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, 40th anniversary, message.

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