

Message on National Astronaut Day

May 5, 2026

In the morning hours of May 5, 1961, Commander Alan Shepard cemented his place in history when he became the first American to journey into the final frontier, propelling the United States into the space race and signaling a glorious new era of cosmic discovery. Today, as we celebrate National Astronaut Day, we pay tribute to the generations of brave men and women who have followed in his footsteps and are now carrying our Nation's beautiful flag farther into space than ever before.

Commander Shepard's courage aboard *Freedom 7* will forever stand as a testament to American excellence and our relentless pursuit into the unknown. Since that epic flight, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has continued to push the boundaries of human potential. From Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin etching humanity's first footprints on the ancient dust of the lunar surface to landing rovers on Mars, America continues to set the gold standard for space exploration, and together, our Nation is making history once again among the stars.

Last month, American astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, and Christina Koch, alongside Canadian Space Agency astronaut Jeremy Hansen, embarked on a groundbreaking voyage aboard the spacecraft *Integrity* on the Artemis II mission, launching deep into space on top of one of the most powerful rockets ever built. These brave explorers of the unknown traveled 695,081 miles through the vast expanses of space, triumphantly carrying our beautiful Stars and Stripes farther from Earth than mankind has ever reached before.

Journeying around the Moon for the first time in over 50 years, the Artemis II crew gave us a new understanding of our celestial neighbor and advanced our knowledge of deep space travel, information that will prove essential as we prepare to return American boots to the Moon by 2028 and advance toward a permanent American settlement on the lunar surface, with our future sights set firmly on the red dunes of Mars.

Under my Executive order to ensure American space superiority, we are reaching for the stars once again with the same ingenuity, courage, and indomitable spirit that have defined our national story for 250 years. Freedom will fly once again: We are advancing space nuclear technology for the journey to Mars, empowering innovation across the commercial space industry, and securing American space dominance for generations to come. Our Republic stands at the dawn of a new golden age of space exploration, one that will carry the hopes and ambitions of our people farther into the great beyond than ever before.

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