

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Soviet Union launched the first satellite, Sputnik 1, into orbit on October 4, 1957, initiating the “Space Race.” When the 85<sup>th</sup> Congress reconvened in 1958, one of its first tasks was the creation of a Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration. This Select Committee wrote the Space Act, which established the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the permanent House Committee on Science and Astronautics, the forerunner of the present Committee on Science and Technology.

The Science and Astronautics Committee was the first standing committee created in the House in 11 years and the first committee since 1892 to be established for an entirely new area of jurisdiction. The Committee’s initial jurisdiction included exploration and control of outer space, astronautical research and development, scientific research and development, science scholarships and legislation relating to scientific agencies. The scientific agencies under the Committee initially included the National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology), NASA, the National Aeronautics and Space Council, and the National Science Foundation.

In 1974, the Committee’s name was changed to the Committee on Science and Technology. At that time, the Committee’s jurisdiction was expanded to include legislation related to energy, the environment, the atmosphere, civil aviation research and development and the National Weather Service. The Committee on Science and Technology was also given a “special oversight” function providing for exclusive responsibility among all Congressional Standing Committees to review and study, on a continuing basis, all laws, programs and government activities involving Federal non-military research and development.

Civilian nuclear research and development was added to the Committee’s jurisdiction in 1977 when the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy was abolished. The name was again changed at the outset of the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. The Republican Party took control of the House in 1995 and officially changed the name of the Committee to the Committee on Science.

In its early years, the Committee was an important partner in the Apollo Program that led to a man landing on the moon and strengthening science education and scientific research. After the Committee’s role expanded, the Committee has played an important role in much of the legislation Congress has considered dealing with domestic and international science, technology, standards and competitiveness.

Members of the Committee have gone on to play important roles in Congress and the Executive Branch. Alumni of the Select Committee and the Science Committee have included President Ford, Vice President Gore, Senate Majority Leader Reid, Commerce and Transportation Secretary Mineta and Agriculture Secretary Glickman.

Congressman Bart Gordon (D-TN) was named Chairman of the Committee when Democrats resumed control of Congress in 2007. He subsequently brought the Committee back to its roots with a return to the name of Committee on Science and Technology – a move made to better reflect the broad jurisdiction of the panel.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee comprises five subcommittees: Energy & Environment; Technology & Innovation; Research & Science Education; Space & Aeronautics; and Investigations & Oversight.