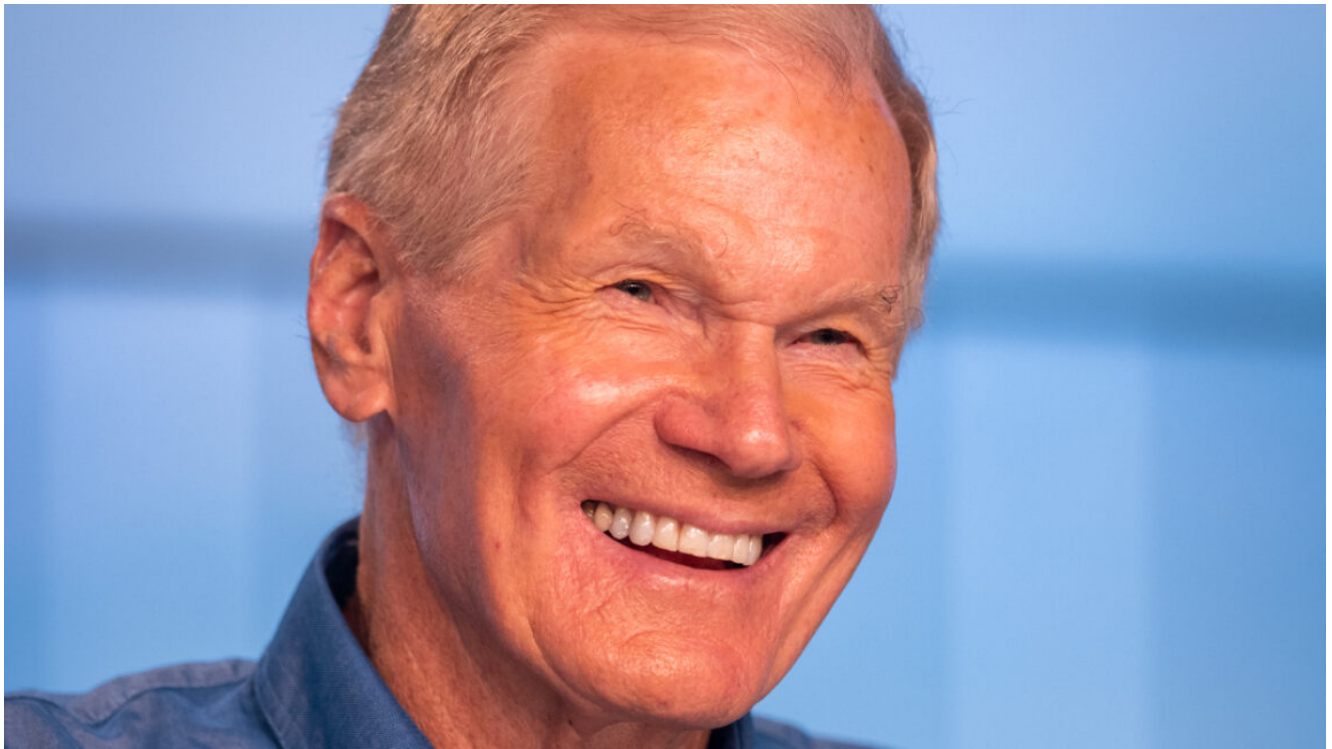


Outgoing NASA administrator urges incoming leaders to stick with Artemis plan



Ars: *What's going on with the Mars Sample Return mission? You made an important decision about a year ago by shutting the current program down for a re-think.*

Bill Nelson: On Tuesday, we're going to announce the Mars sample return decisions, and it will not put the new administration in a box. We're going to work it up with options for them to consider, and then, in large part, it's going to be their decisions because of the funding. But sooner or later, the samples will be returned from Mars, and therefore, we will have an idea that millions of years ago, was there life on Mars? And what happened? And what can we learn if there was life that we could become better stewards of ours?

Ars: *Do you think you have some options that are affordable for the mission? From a schedule and cost standpoint, it was*

looking pretty untenable.

Bill Nelson: Well, that's why I pulled the plug on it, because it was too costly, and it was going to take all the way to 2040, and that's unacceptable. So I think you will see in the options that we're going to present on Tuesday that our desire to bring it in quicker and cheaper is certainly doable.

Ars: *What do you think of the Trump administration's plan to nominate private astronaut and entrepreneur Jared Isaacman as your successor?*

Bill Nelson: I don't really know him. I've met him. I called him on the day it was announced and congratulated him and told him that I was happy to help in any way. But I really do not know him. Obviously, a lot of people think very highly of him, and so I wish him well, and if he is confirmed as the administrator of NASA, he will certainly have my support.

Ars: *Do you think it's appropriate for the next administration to review the Artemis Program?*

Bill Nelson: Are you implying that Artemis should be canceled?

Ars: *No. I don't think Artemis will be canceled in the main. But I do think they're going to take a look at the way the missions are done at the architecture. I know NASA just went through that process with Orion's heat shield.*

Bill Nelson: Well, I think questioning what you're doing clearly is always an issue that ought to be on the table. But do I think that they are going to cancel, as some of the chatter out there suggests, and replace SLS with Starship? The answer is no.

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2025/01/outgoing-nasa-administrator-urges-incoming-leaders-to-stick-with-artemis-plan/>