

Moody touts FL for space academy

Senator: 'Rockets are
already launching here'

Rick Neale

Florida Today

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Sen. Ashley Moody, R-Florida, believes the newly proposed U.S. Space Academy should set up shop amid the Sunshine State's thriving space-industry ecosystem, rather than making taxpayers spend to build such infrastructure elsewhere.



Moody

"Choose Florida. The rockets are already launching here. The scientists, engineers, students and skilled workers are already here,"

Moody said Monday, Sept. 8, during a news conference at Space Florida's offices on Merritt Island.

"The ecosystem is built. And it is here. And the infrastructure America needs is already here," Moody said.

"Why would we pay to build it somewhere else when we've already built it right here in Florida?" she asked.

On Aug. 28, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to establish the country's first U.S. Space Academy. Moody announced plans Monday to introduce legislation to designate the national academy's permanent home in Florida.

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NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman will chair a new presidential commission on the future space academy, and NASA Deputy Administrator Matt Anderson will serve as executive director.

"A report from the commission to the President is due within 120 days of the signing with recommendations on governance framework, service obligations for graduates, physical location of the academy, legislative requirements, and more," a NASA press release said.

No geographic decisions have been announced. During Monday's press event, Moody was joined at the podium by Space Florida President and CEO Rob Long; Lynda Weatherman, president and CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast; and Florida Institute of Technology President John Nicklow.

Moody cited Space Florida's November 2024 designation of the Florida University Space Research Consortium, which includes eight universities: Florida Tech, University of Central Florida, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Florida A&M University, Florida International University, Florida State University, University of Florida and University of South Florida.

"On the Space Coast, hard work is the norm. Space isn't just something students read about in the textbooks. Students study propulsion in the classroom in the morning — and watch rockets leave the pad before sunset," Nicklow told the audience.

Weatherman said students in Brevard County can learn from NASA scientists, engineers, Space Force guardians, astronauts, commercial-space operators, researchers, entrepreneurs and industry leaders.

"They can participate in internships, applied research, mission support, technology demonstration and other learning opportunities," Weatherman said.

"They would have the opportunity to see firsthand how a spacecraft moves from concept to manufacturing, processing, launch, operation, and eventual return and refurbishment without leaving Florida's Space Coast," she said.

Rick Neale is a Space Reporter at FLORIDA TODAY, where he has covered news since 2004. Contact Neale at Rneale@floridatoday.com . Twitter/X: @Rick-Neale1



A SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket lifts off from Pad 39A at Kennedy Space Center Aug. 30. The rocket is carrying the Nancy Grace Roman space

Telescope. CRAIG BAILEY/FLORIDA TODAY

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