

# First woman, next man on moon will come from these NASA 18

December 10 2020, by Marcia Dunn

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Vice President Mike Pence speaks during the eighth meeting of the National Space Council at the Kennedy Space Center Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020, in Cape Canaveral , Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

NASA has named the 18 astronauts—half of them women—who will

train for its Artemis moon-landing program.

The first woman and next man on the [moon](#) will come from this elite group.

Vice President Mike Pence introduced the [astronauts](#) Wednesday at the close of his final meeting as chairman of the National Space Council. The announcement was made at Florida's Kennedy Space Center, beneath one of only three remaining Saturn V moon rockets from the 1960s and 1970s Apollo program.

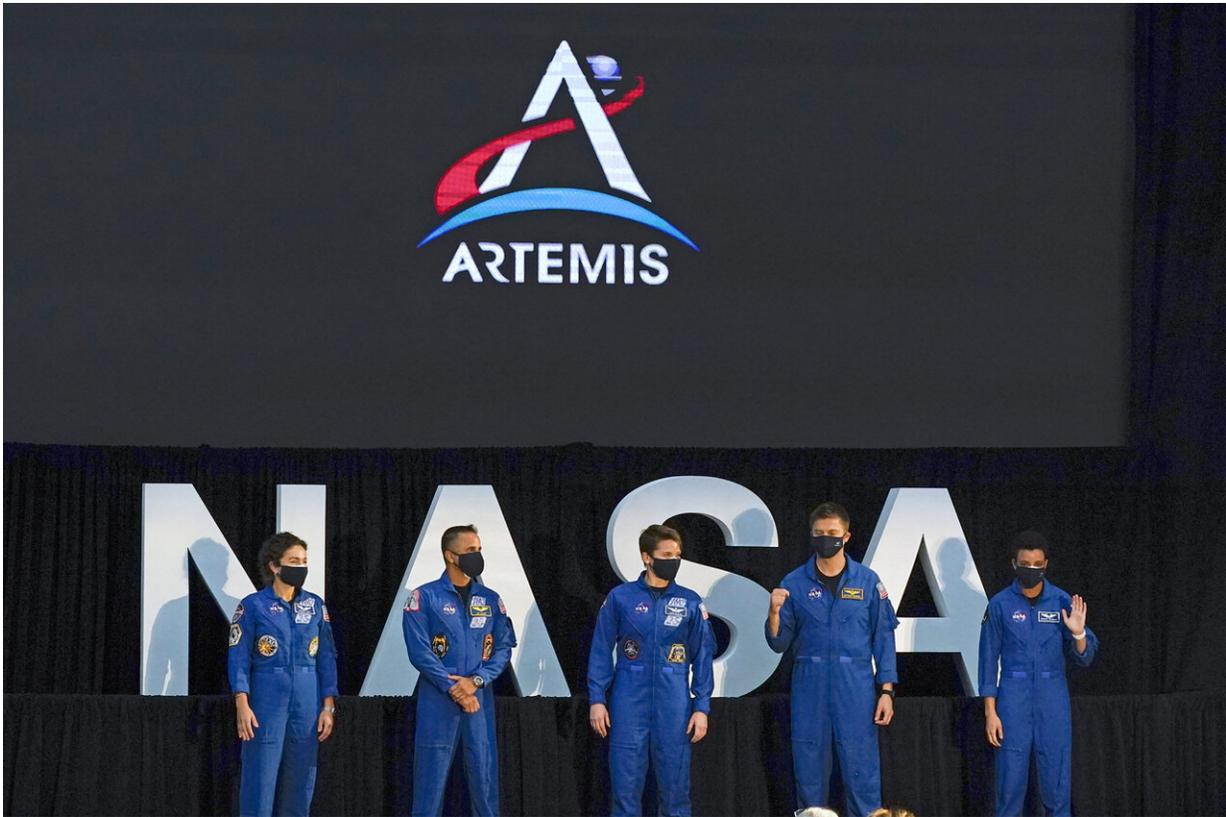
Pence noted that the last of the 12 men to walk on the moon, the late Apollo 17 commander Gene Cernan, wanted nothing more than to remove "last" from his title. Cernan's final lunar footsteps were on Dec. 14, 1972.

"He spent the rest of his natural life advocating for America to go back to the moon, and we are going to honor Gene Cernan's memory," Pence told the small crowd, seated several feet apart from one another.

Five of the astronauts—the only ones in attendance—walked onto the stage, waving and wearing masks.

NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine stressed there would be more astronauts joining the group. NASA has 47 active astronauts.

The [space](#) agency is aiming for a moon landing by 2024, although the chances of that happening are growing increasingly dim. The upcoming change in administration also adds uncertainty.



Five of the astronauts that will be part of the Artemis missions, from left, Jessica Meir, Joe Acaba, Anne McClain, Matthew Dominick, and Jessica Watkins are introduced by Vice President Mike Pence during the eighth meeting of the National Space Council at the Kennedy Space Center Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020, in Cape Canaveral, Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



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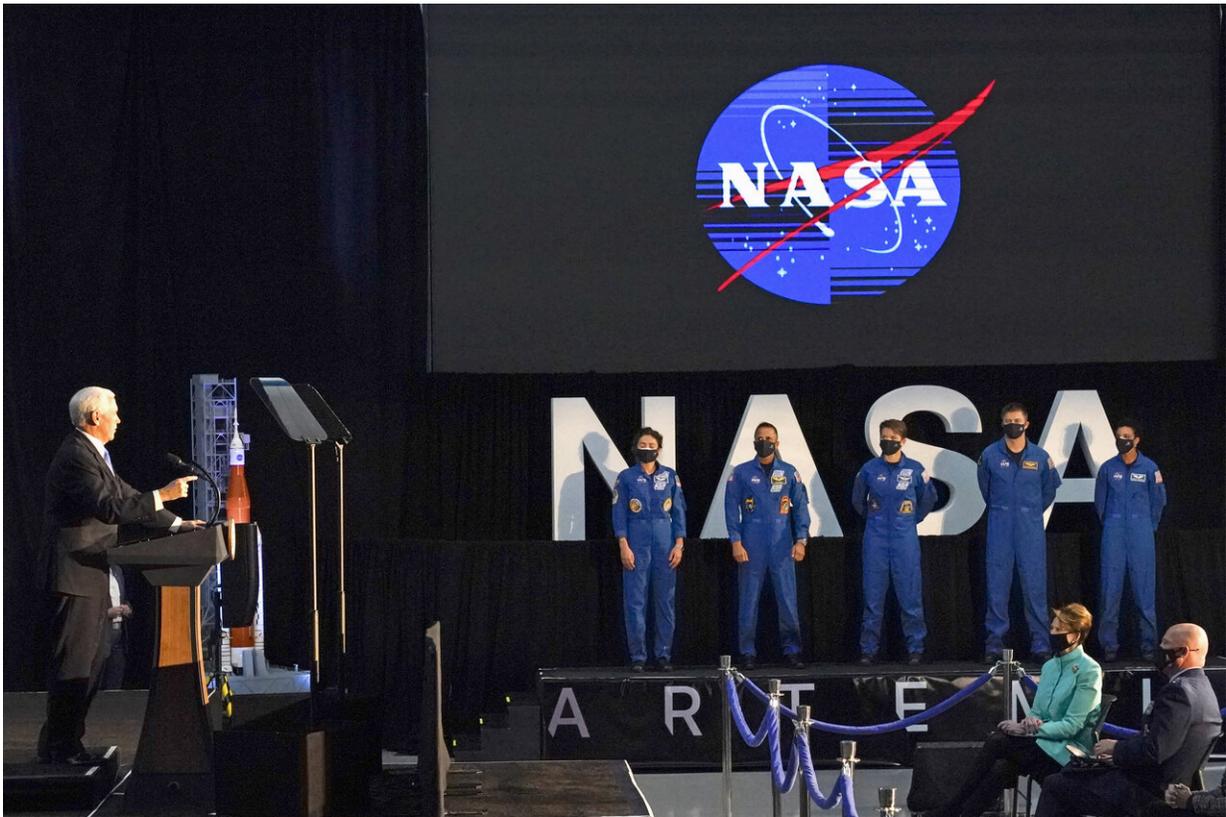
Vice President Mike Pence, below center, speaks during the eighth meeting of the National Space Council at the Kennedy Space Center Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020, in Cape Canaveral , Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)



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Vice President Mike Pence, far left, introduces five of the astronauts that will be part of the Artemis missions, from left, Jessica Meir, Joe Acaba, Anne McClain, Matthew Dominick, and Jessica Watkins during the eighth meeting of the National Space Council at the Kennedy Space Center Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2020, in Cape Canaveral , Fla. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

Half of the NASA astronauts have spaceflight experience. Two are at the International Space Station right now: Kate Rubins and Victor Glover.

The two astronauts who performed the world's first all-female spacewalk last year made the cut: Christina Koch and Jessica Meir.

It's a fairly young group, with most in their 30s or 40s. The oldest is 55, the youngest 32. Only two—Joe Acaba and Stephanie Wilson—flew on NASA's old space shuttles.

"The history is awesome, but we're here to look toward the future," Acaba told reporters after the announcement.

The other experienced members on the list include Kjell Lindgren, Anne McClain and Scott Tingle, all former space station residents.

"We are dreamers, but even more so, we're doers," McClain said.

She wants children from all backgrounds to take note of the diverse lunar team: "The doors are open, come on after us."

Among those yet to rocket into space: Kayla Barron, Raja Chari, Matthew Dominick, Woody Hoburg, Jonny Kim, Nicole Mann, Jasmin Moghbeli, Frank Rubio and Jessica Watkins.

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