U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.), chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee, today met with senior officials at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) Wallops Island Flight Facility to discuss progress towards launching a test rocket, which will carry cargo to the International Space Station. Senator Mikulski toured the Horizontal Integration Facility (HIF) and the launch pad to see first-hand preparations for testing of the Antares rocket, scheduled for later this year.

“As the nation’s only NASA-owned launch site, the Wallops Island Flight Facility is a centerpiece of our space and science infrastructure,” Chairwoman Mikulski said. “I visited Spaceport Wallops to make sure the team is on track in their preparations to send critical tools and supplies to astronauts on the International Space Station from the Lower Shore. There is still a lot of testing and work to be done, but I am encouraged by the close partnership between federal and state agencies along with the private sector here at Wallops Island working to create jobs today and jobs tomorrow.”

As Chairwoman of the CJS Appropriations Subcommittee that funds science, technology and space exploration, including NASA, Senator Mikulski is a long-time champion of the Wallops Island Flight Facility and for investments in science, technology, research and education that lead to American innovation and American jobs. She has put almost more than $70 million in the federal checkbook during the last decade for critical upgrades to Wallops’ infrastructure, including $6 million to make Wallops a hub for broadband service on the Eastern Shore and more than $67 million for launch facilities, which includes $15 million for the HIF and $17 million for the Antares launch pad. In fiscal year 2011, she provided $299 million to support efforts to develop commercial cargo services for the International Space Station.

Wallops Island Flight Facility supports 1,525 high-tech jobs on the Eastern Shore. Work on the Antares rocket at Wallops brings $250 million in economic development in the form of new goods, services and contracts for small businesses.