

## COSPAR Panel on Planetary Protection 21 January 2026

Leslie I. Tennen, Esq., Sterns and Tennen, Phoenix, Arizona USA

- National space agencies have incorporated the COSPAR PPP into their official policies, eg NASA, JAXA, ESA
  - These agencies are obligated to comply with the policy for their missions
- But the policy is not necessarily applicable to private missions
  - Especially if they do not utilize government assets
  - For a short time NASA removed applicability to private entities
- State authorization and licensing regimes for non-governmental entities
  - Outer Space Treaty article VI
- Each state can decide if and how to apply the PPP to the private sector
- It is urged that the COSPAR PPP clarify that it is applicable to all missions, both governmental and non-governmental

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- Risk of contamination exists whether a mission is conducted by a governmental or a non-governmental entity
- Risks are even greater for missions by the private sector, as they will conduct activities that governments will not
  - Prime example is Astrobotic's Moon Box on Peregrine January 2024
  - Contained numerous assorted trinkets and other vanity payloads
  - Not clear if a full inventory was disclosed
- Carried other otiose payloads including human and animal remains
- Raises issues regarding appropriate authorization and supervision
- Mission failed to reach the Moon but other similar missions may be planned
- Numerous reasons why sending these payloads is a bad idea, from sustainability to interference with scientific investigations to cultural insensitivity

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- Risks are multiplied if non-operational and vanity payloads are sent to Mars
  - Increase exponentially if they land intentionally or unintentionally in a special region
- Each item will need to be inventoried and as matter of precaution decontaminated in case of accidental impact
- Can the Mars PPP be circumvented by sending the items to Phobos or Deimos?
  - PPP for missions to the Martian moons, or anywhere in relative proximity to Mars, should be subject to the PPP applicable to Mars to reduce the risk of contamination in the event of accident or other off-nominal event