

BREAKING NEWS  Haine releases annual report for State's Attorney's Office, highlight...

Contact Us (<https://www.timestribunenews.com/contact-us/>)
E-Edition (<https://2481.newstogo.us/editionviewer/default.aspx?Publication=1a8aa3f6-82d4-4582-bcc2-f657be76df3d>)
Subscribe (<https://2481.newstogo.us/editionviewer/default.aspx?Publication=1a8aa3f6-82d4-4582-bcc2-f657be76df3d&view=subscribe>)
Archives (<https://2481.newstogo.us/editionviewer/default.aspx?Publication=1a8aa3f6-82d4-4582-bcc2-f657be76df3d&view=archives>)
 (<https://www.facebook.com/troytimestribune/>)
 (<mailto:editor.timestribune@gmail.com>)



Times Tribune

Madison County's Leading Independent Newspaper

(<https://www.timestribunenews.com>)

Triad alumna working on NASA's project to return astronauts to moon

By Editor (<https://www.timestribunenews.com/author/editor/>) | January 29, 2026 | 0  (<https://www.timestribunenews.com/2026/01/29/triad-alumna-working-on-nasas-project-to-return-astronauts-to-moon/#respond>)



(<https://rdo.to/KWPM>)



(<https://www.max967.com/>)

(<https://rdo.to/KUKU>)



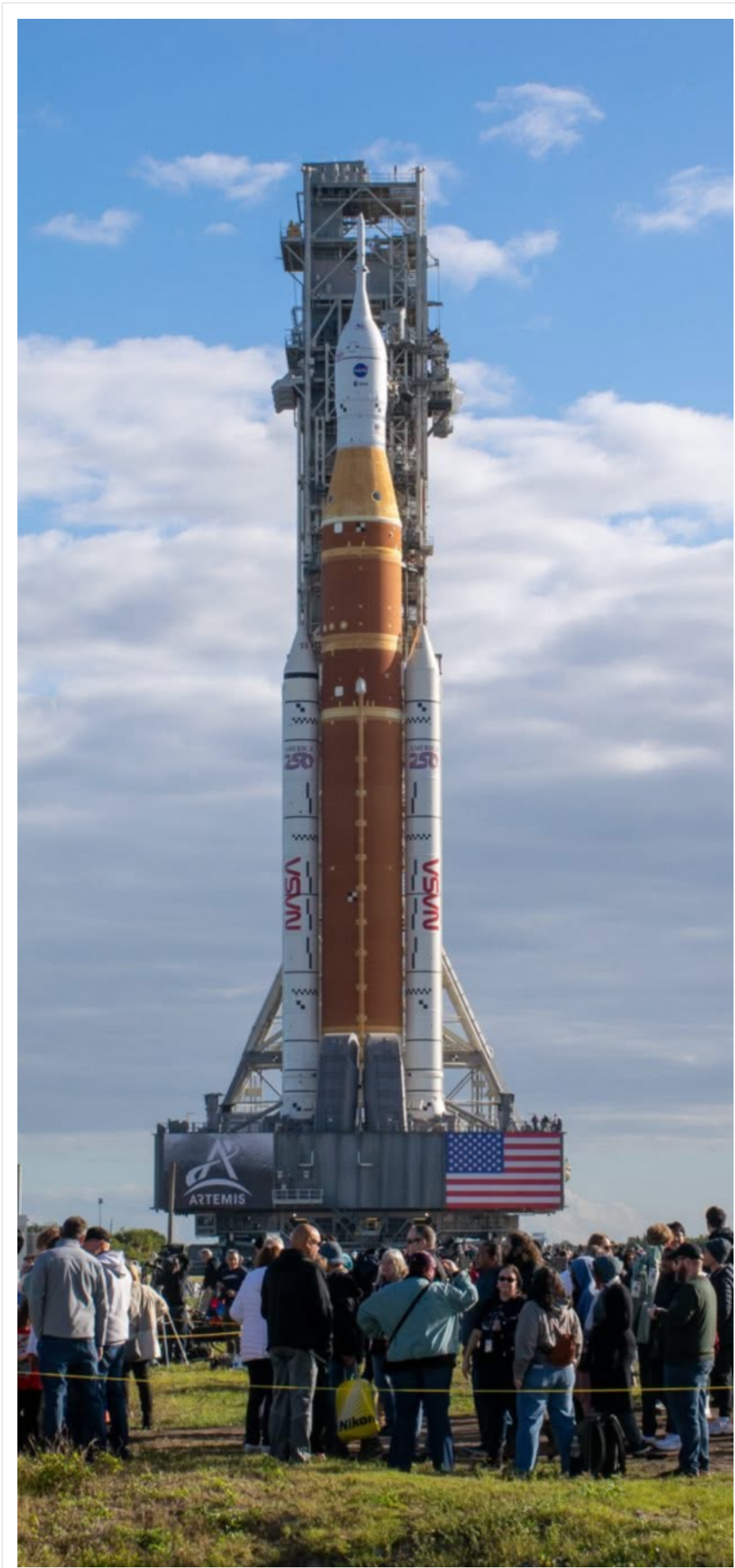
(<https://streamdb6web.securenetsystems.net/cl/KSPQ>)

(<https://rdo.to/KKDY>)

(<https://rdo.to/KUPHFM>)



(<https://rdo.to/KSPQ>)



The Artemis II SLS, part of NASA's multi-phase effort to put people back on the moon.
(Courtesy of Karla Bailer/NASA)

By Bruce Darnell • When Karla Bailer graduated from Triad High School in 1983, she immediately began work at a factory in Highland. Two years later, she joined the United States Air Force and started working on jets. Now, she is an inspector for one of the biggest spaceships in the world.

Since 2016, Bailer has been a quality inspector for Northrop Grumman, a company that typically makes fighter jets or stealth bombers. But they're also involved in aerospace technology and for a number of years, Northrop Grumman has been contracted to work with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, better known as NASA.

"I have to pinch myself all the time," Bailer said. "Every day, I walk in and think how grateful I am to have this job, because it really is amazing."

Despite her dad being in the Navy, Bailer found herself in an Air Force recruitment office a few years after finishing high school. She decided there wasn't a future working in a factory in Highland, one she cannot remember the exact name of and believes likely doesn't exist anymore.

In the Air Force, she found her love for mechanics. She said she never did great in high school, but

COUNTDOWN TO AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY
(//www.tickcounter.com/)
92 : 06 : 15 : 38
DAYS HOURS MINUTES SECONDS

**LUCCO BROWN
& HERTZ LLC**

ATTORNEYS AT LAW
Practice Areas:
General Civil Practice Criminal Defense
Wills, Trusts, & Estates Business Formation
Real Estate & Litigation
224 Saint Louis Street, P.O. Box 539
Edwardsville, IL 62025
P: (618) 656-2321 F: (618) 656-2363

(https://www.lbtldlaw.com/)

Our Advertisers

View All Advertisers
(https://
www.timestribunenew
s.com/2481/
advertiser-directory)

Like Us On Facebook

 **Times-Tribune**
4,880 followers
[Follow Page](#)

ZAP 2 it
WHAT TO WATCH. WHERE TO WATCH IT.
(https://tvlistings.gracenote.com/
grid-affiliates.html?aid=betternws)

started doing much better once she was learning about mechanics and jet engines in the military. After a little more than a decade, she started crawling into spaceship boosters.

Bailer works in the booster fabrication facility at Kennedy Space Center. She said her work takes anywhere from three to six months to make sure the rocket's boosters are clear for a launch.

She will check for cracks, incorrect parts, electronic soldering and anything else her in-depth paperwork asks her to look for. She also said inspectors are highly encouraged to work out any and all confusions with engineers, as safety and clarity is the primary concern.

Bailer often marvels at the size of these rockets, which can make anyone feel like an ant when going into work. The most recent project is the Artemis II SLS, or Space Launch System. Now that it's fully assembled, it stands at around 322 feet tall; the boosters alone are about 164 feet tall. Three hundred and twenty-two feet is just more than half of the Gateway Arch's height.

She gets an emotional reaction every time she sees one of the spaceships she worked on launch from the space center or Cape Canaveral—specifically, if she can, from a good lookout spot on the pier at Cocoa Beach.

"If you're on the beach at night, it looks like the sun is rising for a moment. The rumble goes through your body and into your heart, and if you're near buildings they'll start whistling," Bailer said. "When I watch them now, I feel like I'm going up there with it to see my mom and dad."

On Jan. 17, Bailer watched Artemis II get wheeled out to the launch site from the vertical assembly building, which is where the rocket is fully put together. Seeing them get prepared for launch can be just as emotional as actually seeing them launch, but Bailer said they get right to work on the next project soon after.

Bailer said their next project is Artemis IV, as Artemis III has already been worked on for some time so they can keep ahead of schedule.

The Artemis Project is an attempt to put people back on the moon. The last time the United States did that was in 1972. Artemis II will send astronauts around the moon instead of landing on it. Artemis III, set to launch next year, is aiming for a landing.

Bailer thinks it's very important we get back to this kind of exploration. She said she plans on retiring, so it's not just her livelihood speaking. She thinks the next step should be landing a person on Mars.

Bailer also thinks it's important for people to see these launches. Where she lives in Cape Canaveral, the residents almost take launches for granted because it happens so often—she and others refer to that area as Space Coast. But to states like Illinois, and especially the areas known for corn and soybean fields, the places we call home, a rocket launch has no comparison. "There's just nothing like it, that's for sure," Bailer said.