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Internet/e-mail:
<http://crapo.senate.gov>

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February 26, 2002

The Honorable Sean O'Keefe
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E St., SW
Washington, D.C. 20546

Dear Administrator O'Keefe:

I write to inquire about the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) intentions regarding the future role of the Teachers in Space Program within the agency's mission. It is my hope you will agree the time has come to re-emphasize this important program.

As you know, the tragic flight of the Space Shuttle Challenger was to be the kickoff of the Teachers in Space Program. It was thought the launching of a teacher into space would be a valuable tool in recruiting talented individuals into the teaching profession. Despite the tragic end to the Challenger mission, it is my understanding officials at NASA have repeatedly supported the continuation of the Teachers in Space Program.

Recently, President Bush has refocused the nation on the need to improve the public education system. The need for quality teachers is as great now as it has ever been. Given the nation's current interest in education, now may be an appropriate time to re-emphasize the importance of the Teachers in Space Program. Not only would the program be a fitting tribute to the late Christa McAuliffe and other educators who have committed their lives to teaching, it could also have a lasting and positive effect on the teaching profession and the public education system.

I encourage you to examine the current status of the Teacher in Space Program. I look forward to receiving your response with NASA's plans for the future of this vital program. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Mike Crapo
United States Senator