

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2011

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546-0001

Dear Administrator Bolden:

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding recent developments with plans to display the *Enterprise* test orbiter at the Intrepid Air, Space, and Sea Museum in New York City.

From our understanding, each institution interested in receiving a retired orbiter submitted to NASA a specific proposal detailing such information as their funding capability, transportation plan, and transfer dates. Throughout the three-year orbiter location selection process, the Intrepid Museum in New York City frequently lauded its proposal to house an orbiter in a glass building next to its existing Concorde display at the end of Pier 86 on the Hudson River. Bill White, Intrepid Museum President at the time, described on numerous occasions his plans to build a "glass enclosure near the Concorde" to host the orbiter. Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), speaking on the floor of the U.S. Senate, stated unequivocally that "the Intrepid will house the shuttle in a glass enclosure on Pier 86, close to Times Square."

However, a recent *New York Times* article outlined the unrealistic assumptions upon which the Intrepid Museum's winning proposal was based. Recognizing the deep flaws in their original proposal, the Intrepid Museum submitted a new plan to display the *Enterprise* in what is currently an empty parking lot on the opposite side of the West Side Highway from Pier 86. The Intrepid Museum would be required to purchase the lot, which belongs to the New York State Department of Transportation. The parking lot is currently zoned for manufacturing, which would preclude its use for other purposes (including for display of the *Enterprise*). This new proposal dramatically changes the location where the orbiter will be hosted, as well as the venue in which it will be located.

We understandably have serious concerns with this development as it relates to the transfer of the *Enterprise* from the Udvar-Hazy Center at Washington Dulles International Airport to the Intrepid Museum, and we hereby request answers to the following questions:

1. How does the Intrepid Museum plan to acquire the property rights to the parking lot, successfully petition the City of New York to rezone the property, and build the structure to display the *Enterprise* within the delivery schedule that NASA has implemented? Who will pay for these additional costs?
2. According to NASA's Office of the Inspector General, it would cost NASA approximately \$490,000 taxpayer dollars per month to maintain and support the aircraft and crew needed to ferry the orbiters to their final destinations. It would also cost approximately \$110,000 taxpayer dollars per month for the energy, operations, and maintenance to house an orbiter at the Kennedy Space Center. How does the

Administration plan to pay for these additional expenses in the event that the Intrepid Museum is unable to receive proper delivery of the *Enterprise* on time? Will the taxpayers contribute to the additional costs or the Intrepid Museum? If it is the Intrepid Museum, has it given NASA assurance that it possesses the necessary financial resources to do so? If so, what are the resources?

3. According to the *New York Times* article, there are plans to transport the *Enterprise* to a climate-controlled "tent" located at John F. Kennedy International Airport for storage until the final display structure at the Intrepid Museum is complete. Has the museum indicated the length of time the orbiter would be housed at Kennedy Airport? If so what is that length of time? Is this proposal consistent with NASA's goals to (1) place the orbiters where they would be preserved for history and seen by the greatest number of visitors and (2) save taxpayer dollars?

4. After investigating NASA's selection of display locations for the Space Shuttle orbiters, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) made three specific recommendations for corrective action:

- expeditiously review recipients financial, logistical, and curatorial display plans to ensure they are feasible and consistent with the Agency's education goals and processing and delivery schedules;
- ensure that recipient payments are closely coordinated with processing schedules, do not impede NASA's ability to efficiently prepare the orbiters for museum display, and provide sufficient funds in advance of the work to be performed; and
- work closely with the recipient organizations to minimize the possibility of delays in the delivery schedule that could increase the Agency's costs or impact other NASA missions and priorities.

Are the Administration and NASA planning to reevaluate the decision to place the *Enterprise* at the Intrepid Museum, with respect to the OIG's recommendations and in light of the drastic alterations to the original proposal submitted to NASA that was the basis of NASA's selection of *Enterprise's* new home?

As you are aware, there were many other cities that also wanted to host a shuttle orbiter, cities that will revere and cherish a space shuttle orbiter. Congress will hold NASA accountable for the necessary and appropriate transfer of the shuttle orbiters to locations that will uphold the criteria set forth in the original NASA authorization bill that outlined the proper display and access by U.S. taxpayers to visit the shuttle orbiters. American taxpayers deserve to know the answers to the above questions before any further action is taken with respect to locating *Enterprise* at the Intrepid Museum.

We appreciate your serious consideration of these questions, and we look forward to your response.

Very respectfully,



Pete Olson (TX-22)
Member of Congress



Steven Palazzo (MS-04)
Member of Congress

Ted Poe (TX-02)
Member of Congress

Kevin Brady (TX-08)
Member of Congress

Gene Green (TX-29)
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson-Lee (TX-18)
Member of Congress

Michael McCaul (TX-10)
Member of Congress

John Abney Culberson (TX-07)
Member of Congress

Al Green (TX-09)
Member of Congress

Steve Austria (OH-07)
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop (UT-01)
Member of Congress

Adam Smith (WA-09)
Member of Congress

Francisco "Quico" Canseco (TX-23)
Member of Congress

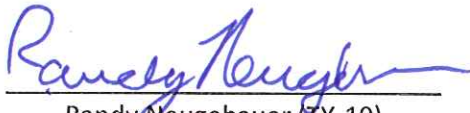
Jason Chaffetz (UT-03)
Member of Congress

John Carter (TX-31)
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock (CA-04)
Member of Congress

Jay Inslee (WA-01)
Member of Congress

Joe Barton (TX-06)
Member of Congress



Randy Neugebauer (TX-19)
Member of Congress



Dave Reichert (WA-08)
Member of Congress



Sam Johnson (TX-03)
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05)
Member of Congress



Charles J. "Chuck" Fleischmann (TN-03)
Member of Congress



Betty Sutton (OH-13)
Member of Congress

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Michael Burgess (TX-26)
Member of Congress



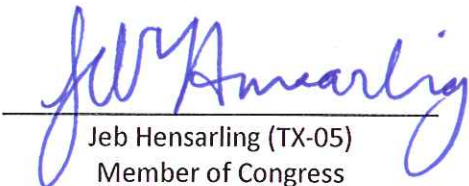
Ken Calvert (CA-44)
Member of Congress



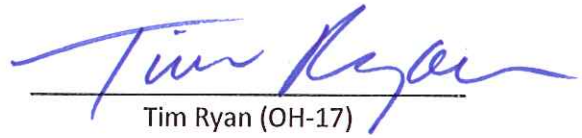
Michael Turner (OH-03)
Member of Congress



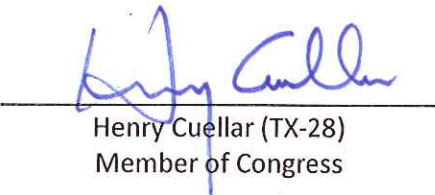
Rick Larsen (WA-02)
Member of Congress



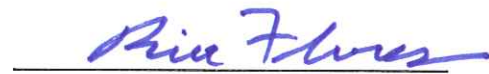
Jeb Hensarling (TX-05)
Member of Congress



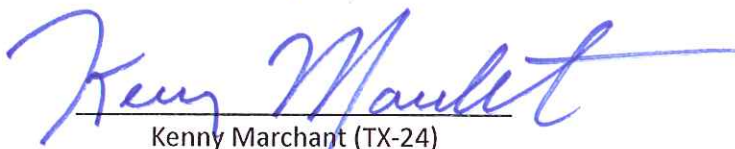
Tim Ryan (OH-17)
Member of Congress



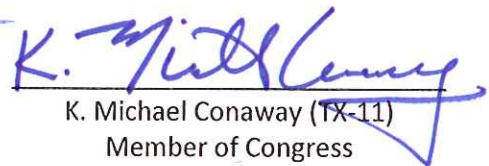
Henry Cuellar (TX-28)
Member of Congress



Bill Flores (TX-17)
Member of Congress



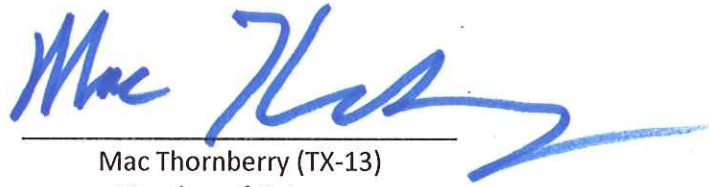
Kenny Marchant (TX-24)
Member of Congress



K. Michael Conaway (TX-11)
Member of Congress



Blake Farenthold (TX-27)
Member of Congress



Mac Thornberry (TX-13)
Member of Congress



Pete Sessions (TX-32)
Member of Congress



Louis Gohmert (TX-01)
Member of Congress



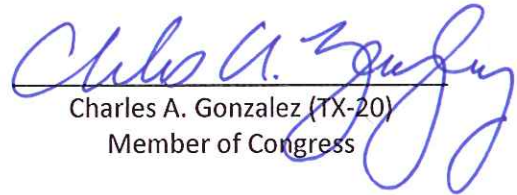
Kay Granger (TX-12)
Member of Congress



Lamar Smith (TX-21)
Member of Congress



Pat Tiberi (OH-13)
Member of Congress



Charles A. Gonzalez (TX-20)
Member of Congress