

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 4, 2010

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As members of the Florida congressional delegation, we write to express deep concerns with the Administration's FY 2011 budget request as it relates to the future of America's space program. While the budget request was presented to Members of Congress and staff as a game-changing strategy to move America's human space program beyond activities in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) serious questions remain regarding its goals, milestones, inherent cost and schedule risks, and severe disruptions to the workforce at our nation's premier spaceport.

The Administration's decision to terminate the Constellation program, after \$9 billion of taxpayer investments and a successful test flight four months ago of Ares 1-X, and a termination price tag of \$2.5 billion, comes perhaps as the biggest surprise, but it is especially worrisome considering no other specific heavy-lift program is proposed in its place. Coupled with the planned retirement of the Shuttle, this leaves the future of U.S. human spaceflight in serious doubt, and the highly skilled workforce with the prospect of a major upheaval from which it and our space program will not have the hope of recovery for many years.

We remind you that the Constellation program has enjoyed strong, bipartisan Congressional support, as reflected in authorization and appropriations measures. Public comments from Administration and NASA officials allude to future missions to the moon, Mars and elsewhere but fall short of the clarity that has always formed an integral part of direction for our nation's space program.

The importance of space exploration for the United States is well established but is sometimes taken for granted as we reap the benefits from decades of previous commitments and investments in our space program. America's leadership in space has contributed to our national security, generated countless spinoffs and inventions that have contributed significantly to our technological advancement and economic competitiveness, led to the creation of high-skilled jobs, and inspired leaders of tomorrow. As with all great human achievements, our commitment to space must be renewed and encouraged or we will surely be surpassed by other nations who are presently challenging our leadership in space. Likewise, space exploration can be crowded out by other budget priorities if the assumption is made that our leadership will continue indefinitely regardless of vision and resources.



Floridians take special pride in hosting the workforce and infrastructure essential for our nation's human space flight program. According to NASA's own numbers from FY 2008, the economic impact of NASA in Florida resulted in over 40,000 jobs, over \$2 billion in household income, and hundreds of millions of dollars in federal, state and local taxes. You can understand that Floridians are especially concerned about the future of America's space program.



We are concerned that the plan NASA has laid out fails to provide a manageable transition of the workforce and is likely to repeat the mistakes that plagued Florida at the end of the Apollo program. Those were not only the loss of thousands of jobs and serious adverse economic hardship, but also the disruption and loss of a well-trained and highly-skilled aerospace workforce. Repeating these past mistakes would be unfortunate to say the least.

Additionally, the FY 2011 Budget Estimates document is very vague concerning plans and missions as they relate to work in Florida and Kennedy Space Center (KSC) in particular. While the document refers to upgrades at KSC to create a 21st Century Space Launch Complex Program, test flights, and commercial and cargo flights, the future role of the Center as a launching site (or in any capacity) remains unclear, as does the role of Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. The document mentions critical technology demonstrations, heavy-lift and propulsion R&D, robotic precursor missions, some of which may or may not utilize Florida's infrastructure and workforce. We are concerned over the lack of details. Please provide to us as soon as possible an adequately detailed understanding of NASA's plans for KSC and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

Finally, in light of the risks and uncertainties of your plan for the future of U.S. human spaceflight, we are concerned about the loss of the ability of the United States to launch our astronauts to the International Space Station (ISS) and maximize its functionality due to the rapidly approaching, planned retirement of the Space Shuttle. Sole reliance on Russia for access to the ISS with no redundancy during the planned gap poses serious risk to our space program. We believe it would be prudent to ensure not only that there is redundancy, but also that the U.S. retains a domestic capability to take our astronauts to the ISS and to deliver hardware that will ensure its utilization through at least 2020. Given the lack of this capability in the outline presented by your Administration, we would ask that you work with us to guarantee that this capability remains. We believe that our Nation's independent access to space should not be terminated unless approved by Congress in the NASA authorization bill and FY 2011 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

  
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