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November 3, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
1600 Penn. Ave.  
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear Mr. President:

At last the U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee has issued its final report. While more detailed than the summary report issued in early September, the final report reiterates that NASA will require additional funding in order to close the space gap and move forward with the Constellation program.

The Committee's analysis affirms that "the only way to eliminate or significantly reduce the gap in human spaceflight launch capability is by extending the Shuttle Program." The Committee also affirms that the cost of continuing to operate the Shuttle is significantly less than most have assumed. The Committee makes clear that "savings resulting from Shuttle retirement are not as great as they may appear. Conversely, the marginal costs of flying the Shuttle are less than implied by existing bookkeeping." The report observes that while the annual Shuttle budget is approximately \$3 billion per year, about \$1.5 billion of that is devoted to fixed costs, costs that NASA will incur whether they continue to fly the Shuttle or retire the Shuttle.

Further savings of hundreds of millions of dollars per year would be achieved by not being forced to pay the Russians to fly U.S. astronauts to the International Space Station, by avoiding non-safety-related upgrades to the Shuttle, and by perhaps retiring one of the Shuttle orbiters. The marginal cost of continuing to operate the Shuttle is only a fraction of the \$3 billion that has been often but incorrectly assumed.

The Augustine Committee adds that the Shuttle will need to be recertified. However, the highly skilled men and women who keep the Shuttle flying safely are required to perform such safety certifications each time the Shuttle flies. A full recertification could be readily accomplished by the workforce. The report also notes that "flying into space is inherently risky" and while "future vehicles will carry less risk than the Shuttle, the Shuttle has reached a level of maturity that those [new] launch vehicles will not reach for many years. (Those vehicles have their 'infant mortality' phase ahead of them.)" The reliability of the Shuttle should not be discounted.

As you know, I and my Florida colleague, Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Shultz, introduced, H.R. 1962, the *American Space Access Act*, which would meet both of your stated objectives last fall. The legislation would close the gap from both ends, authorize additional resources and welcome

the rise of American commercial capabilities. Our bill extends the operation of the Shuttle well beyond the scheduled 2010 retirement date and provides additional resources for the Constellation program.

Mr. President, regardless of which specific course of action you determine, it will be necessary to revise your budget plan and allocate sufficient funding to NASA human space flight in order to keep your commitment to close the gap and keep America first in space. The Committee states that technical and logistical challenges in bringing Constellation online are not insurmountable, but the envy of the world—America's space program—cannot be done on the cheap. We know that in recent years, NASA funding has woefully lagged behind realistic levels to implement their programs. In fact, the Constellation program budget as proposed through 2014 will fall nearly \$20 billion short of what was promised when the program was started. Space has proven to be beneficial to every American in ways far greater than in the amounts appropriated by Congress. America's Space program surely merits the extra investment it needs to continue. We cannot and should not cede America's leadership in space to other nations.

Many of my colleagues and I are prepared to work with you in achieving this. Please know that you, the First Lady, and your daughters would be welcome to tour the Kennedy Space Center's exhibits and enjoy the thrilling Shuttle Launch Experience. I hope to see you at a future launch. Shuttle Atlantis is currently scheduled for a launch date of November 16, to deliver equipment to the International Space Station.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Posey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bill Posey  
Member of Congress