

01 March 2011

Dear Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned space leaders—over 50 of us, are strong supporters of human spaceflight. We are writing to urge you to fully fund NASA's plan to use commercial companies to carry crew to the Space Station because it is critical to the health of the Nation's human spaceflight efforts.

Among us are former NASA executives and advisors, former astronauts, CEOs and directors of firms large and small, space scientists, space journalists, and others. We include 14 former NASA astronauts, 5 former NASA senior executives, 13 educators and nonprofit leaders, and 24 space industry leaders from a wide variety of firms and institutions, both large and small.

We are a diverse group, but we are only a tiny fraction of the Nation's citizens who support U.S. leadership in human space flight and the development of competitive commercial human spaceflight.

By creating competition, and using fixed price contracts, NASA's commercial crew program offers a much less expensive way of transporting NASA astronauts to the Station than any other domestic means. Funding NASA's Commercial Crew program would lower the cost of access to low Earth orbit, thus enabling more of NASA's budget to be applied to its focus on exploration beyond low Earth orbit, and better enabling the kind of program laid out in NASA's authorization bill.

NASA's competitive commercial crew program is the best way to restore US human launch capability after the Space Shuttle retires later this year, to ensure NASA's long-term role in the International Space Station, and to open up budget resources to send crew beyond Earth orbit.

Moreover, by being less expensive than other approaches to Space Station crew transport, the Commercial Crew program represents one of the best means to prevent damage to NASA's human spaceflight capabilities in the face of across the board spending cuts being discussed by Congress.

After the Space Shuttle retires, Russia is set to carry American astronauts to the Space Station. By hiring American businesses, NASA's Commercial Crew to Space Station program also generates thousands of high tech American jobs across states ranging from Florida, to Alabama, to Texas, to California, to Virginia, to Colorado, to Nevada, and to Maryland, rather than sending these jobs overseas to Russia to build Soyuz capsules and rockets.

For these important reasons, we fully and enthusiastically support full funding for NASA's commercial crew to Space Station program and urge you to support this program as well in your votes this year.

Sincerely,
The undersigned, listed alphabetically

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