

# **NASA All-Hands Address on Support of the FY2011 Budget Proposal**

NASA Johnson Space Center

Houston, TX

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I have come home to Houston and JSC to address a critical issue for our Agency and the actions I feel will be necessary for our Nation to achieve a more exciting and productive future in space. While there are changes that will be necessary across the four mission directorates of the Agency, I will only address the incredibly important area of human space flight today.

With his FY2011 budget request and his speech on April 15, 2010 at KSC, President Barack Obama has provided us the assets and vision needed to make a critical turn in the trajectory of our human space flight program and a long-range strategy to extend human presence beyond low Earth orbit, eventually to the ultimate destination in our Solar system – the planet Mars. If we flounder and lose out on this opportunity, it is unlikely that our Nation will have a similar opportunity in our lifetime, we will lose our position of technological leadership, and perhaps most importantly, we will lose a generation of young scientists and engineers inspired into these careers by NASA's human spaceflight program.

While reasonable people can disagree, even before I rolled out our proposed FY2011 budget, the battle lines had been drawn between two groups that I refer to as ideologues – The first, those who believe that only by handing over development and operation of our human space launch enterprise to the commercial sector can we move into the future in an efficient and productive manner. The second, those who believe that only the government can be trusted with launching humans into space. Those in these two extreme camps seem unwilling to agree on anything. To the first – any remnant of the Constellation Program of Record left standing will spell the end of any hope for the development and success of a commercial space launch industry. To the second – any near-term move toward dependence on the commercial sector as the primary provider of access to LEO will certainly end in disaster and spell the end of human space flight in the US.

Feeding on leaks and "anonymous statements" from members of both groups, the media have had a field day pitting these two camps against one another and fueling opposition to the President's vision for our future in exploration and the passage in Congress of his proposed FY2011 NASA budget. While tempted to do so, I won't go into the specifics of any of these reports, as it would be viewed by some as blaming the messenger for our internal problems with communicating effectively among our team.

I have respect for colleagues in each of these two camps. There are numerous vehicles for our employees to express divergent view points and I urge you all to exercise your right and obligation to speak up when you disagree with a course of action under consideration. As I said earlier, reasonable people can agree to disagree. However, my friends, now is the time that we must pull together. Constructive dialogue is absolutely necessary to hone our ideas and plans but we must not only be unified in our commitment and support for our human spaceflight program but also in our support of the President's vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Space Enterprise. Only in this manner will we realize our dreams of one day exploring beyond low Earth orbit. Only in this manner will we create a strong human spaceflight society in which industry, academia, and government sectors are all passionately engaged. And only in this manner will we create a stronger and more vibrant future in space for our children and grandchildren.

For my friends in the media – and I think you all know that I mean that in all sincerity – our NASA team cannot be successful in telling our incredible story without your cooperation and assistance. I will always attempt to be responsive to your requests for access, within reason. But you are not a friend of the space program when you misrepresent the statements or actions of our dedicated, loyal workforce for the sake of a headline-winning story. Again, please don't take this as an attempt to blame the messenger for NASA's problems. That is not the case nor my intent. Rather, please realize that this is a major change in trajectory for our Nation's space program, and that such change is bound to be turbulent in the formative stages. I know that this Nation's aerospace enterprise is capable of coming together and moving forward as one.

So how did we get here? After I left the active Astronaut Corps in 1994 and returned to the operating forces of the U.S. Marine Corps, I continued to follow with great personal interest activities of NASA and particularly the human space flight program. I accepted an appointment to the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel as well as appointments to several National Research Council independent study groups – perhaps most notable of which was my participation on the NRC committee to study saving Hubble after Administrator Sean O'Keefe's decision to cancel the final human servicing mission to the Hubble Space Telescope, SM-4. During this time, I was not hesitant to criticize NASA actions or inactions when deemed appropriate and I tried to be an advocate for the Agency in appearances before public audiences all over the world. However, as many of you here at JSC and at other centers around the country know, I began to hear anecdotal reports about problems with the Constellation Program not long after its conception in response to the announcement of the *Vision for Space Exploration*. I co-chaired a panel empowered by Administrator O'Keefe to study the Exploration Systems Launch Architecture in which we evaluated the various existing and prospective launch systems that would be needed to allow us to venture beyond LEO, return to the Moon, and travel on to Mars and other deep space destinations. After announcement of the VSE, all of us we greatly disappointed when President George W. Bush failed to even mention spaceflight

in the State of the Union Address. Although many of us expected he'd deliver a speech in time expressing support for his vision, no such speech ever came and expected funding increases needed to support the *Vision* failed to materialize. Over time, due to funding short falls, Constellation Program Management and the NASA Administrator began making trades to preserve our ability to get humans back to the Moon, but the capability to provide lunar landing systems, surface systems, and any real hope of going beyond the Moon evaporated except in the minds of many of us holding on to one last hope. Even before I was ever approached by President Obama about accepting the position of NASA Administrator, it was obvious to me that there were real problems in our human spaceflight program – in particular Constellation - and that it would take courageous actions on the part of the President and NASA leadership to realize the dreams we all share of leading the quest to venture beyond LEO and into deep space with human crews. I was under no illusion when I accepted this position that the road to realization of my personal dream to travel to the Moon and Mars that had been lost to me with the tragic loss of my friends in the crew of STS-51 aboard Challenger on January 28, 1986 – just ten days after my return to Earth from my first incredible mission to space - would be difficult. Even the chances of my granddaughters being able to have this opportunity were remote without some significant change in course in our NASA plans.

So now what must we do? The President has given us a viable strategy, a sequence of compelling destinations, and a mission upon which we can focus. In order to restore any reasonable chance of allowing our children and grandchildren to live out my unfulfilled dream of deep space travel, we need to identify innovative ways to develop the launch systems required to get us off the planet; we must work diligently with the commercial sector to facilitate their success in being able to provide safe, reliable, redundant access to low Earth orbit while we in NASA develop the capability to venture beyond low Earth orbit towards deep space destinations; we must build the requisite capabilities through a broad portfolio of technology advances; and we must find aggressive methods to speed the acquisition and development process so it doesn't take ten years to bring a new system on line and certify it as operational. These changes in the way we operate will not be easy, but they are by no means impossible if we all accept the reality that it's the only way we're going to realize our collective dreams and those of the Nation and our international partners. Success in this endeavor requires your full commitment, expertise and dedication. Success requires that we move forward as an integrated NASA team. I am asking for this support today.

Our contractor workforce stands to bear the brunt of the adverse impacts that will result from this trajectory change in the road ahead, but we will stand by them and help in every way we can to ease the pain of employees needing to transition to other areas of the aerospace industry or even out of our industry. As I have said to all of you before, I can't possibly know how you feel right now because I don't have kids still at home trying to get out of high school or college,

but I can empathize with your situation and do all in my power to compassionately help you deal with your personal situations. We also need you to face the reality that the future will be different than the past. This requires that we not look back to the glory days of Apollo or even the waning era of the phenomenal Space Shuttle, but that we look to the possibilities and opportunities available as we continue our 21<sup>st</sup> century march beyond our home planet. For you to go to members of Congress, the media, and the American public with contradictory information about the road ahead and the need to move on beyond the Constellation Program is not helpful and detracts from our ability to accelerate the needed development programs and innovative technologies that will enable us to reach our deep space goals.

For our prospective commercial launch providers – those with existing COTS or CRS agreements as well as those intending to compete for future agreements and contracts – your challenge is great. You are entering a very mature industry of space launch. We've been sending people and things into space for more than fifty years now, so you will not be afforded the luxury of the Wright Brothers. NASA has a myriad of lessons learned - many of them with the blood of astronauts, technicians, and other employees who took part in maturing this industry. You will either seek the help of your more experienced industry competitors and our incredibly talented NASA team or you will very likely fail. Our commitment is to facilitate your success. We need you to develop a sense of urgency to get cargo to the International Space Station and safely return your vehicles to Earth. Once that goal is accomplished, together we must turn to assuring that you can safely and efficiently get humans to LEO and back to Earth. You must also be able to live up to your promise to the President, the Congress, and the Nation that you can do this in a more efficient and cost effective manner that we in NASA have done in past programs. Your challenge is great, your passion is very much appreciated, and we will be your partner in this endeavor.

Now let me close with some philosophical comments on the very basis of who we are and why we do what we do. In my 34-year career in the Marine Corps, I was and continue to be guided by our *Core Values* of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. These are not just words to a Marine, but the essential tenets by which we try to live our lives every single day whether in combat, peacekeeping, or at home. We in the NASA family – civil service and contractors – are likewise guided by our own *Core Values* – Safety, Excellence, Teamwork, and Integrity - that support our realization of our ultimate goal – mission success. I want to emphasize these *Core Values* for you:

**Safety**—NASA's constant attention to safety is the cornerstone upon which we build mission success. We are committed, individually and as a team, to protecting the safety and health of the public, our team members, and those assets that the Nation entrusts to the Agency.

**Excellence**—To achieve the highest standards in engineering, research, operations, and management in support of mission success, NASA is committed to nurturing an organizational culture in which individuals make full use of their time, talent, and opportunities to pursue excellence in both the ordinary and the extraordinary.

**Teamwork**—NASA's most powerful tool for achieving mission success is a multi-disciplinary team of diverse competent people across all NASA Centers. Our approach to teamwork is based on a philosophy that each team member brings unique experience and important expertise to project issues. Recognition of and openness to that insight improves the likelihood of identifying and resolving challenges to safety and mission success. We are committed to creating an environment that fosters teamwork and processes that support equal opportunity, collaboration, continuous learning, and openness to innovation and new ideas.

**Integrity**—NASA is committed to maintaining an environment of trust, built upon honesty, ethical behavior, respect, and candor. Our leaders enable this environment by encouraging and rewarding a vigorous, open flow of communication on all issues, in all directions, among all employees without fear of reprisal. Building trust through ethical conduct as individuals and as an organization is a necessary component of mission success.

For all of us, these must be more than just words. They must be the tenets that guide our lives day in and day out as we perform the tasks and respond to the challenges our national leadership and our citizens set for us. We must be unwavering in our dedication to these *Core Values* and do all in our power to insure that we make them a part of our personal psyche.

I want to thank all of you, both here at JSC and around the country who are watching or listening to this message, for your incredible dedication to our mission. As I always like to say, we do first-of-a-kind missions every day and we take incredible risks in accomplishing those missions. We do this because we love our work and relish the challenge. I ask for your cooperation, loyalty and strong partnership as we prepare to carry out President Obama's vision for our future and execute the programs supported in our FY2011 budget. If for any reason you're uncomfortable or unwilling to join me on the NASA team, please give me a call, come visit for conversation, or send me e-mail so that we can determine the future role you should play in our quest for expanding the human presence into deep space and other worlds.

God bless all of you and thanks again for all you do!