

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

February 16, 2010

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science and Space
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate

Dear Senator Nelson:

The Administration has proposed a new direction for America's space program, and I believe it is now more important than ever for the Commerce and Appropriations Committees to work in consultation as we consider the Administration's proposals. As a chief appropriator for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA), I will be looking to your Subcommittee's close examination of the Administration's proposals. I thought it might also be helpful to share with you the principles that I will rely on when drafting the fiscal year 2011 funding bill for NASA.

Astronaut Safety – The safety of our astronauts is my number one priority. This means whichever transportation system is chosen, it must protect astronauts during launch, mission execution and re-entry, including during long duration space flight.

Mission Destination – Our human space flight program needs a destination. Since NASA's creation, it has been a mission driven agency, and I believe having a clear direction and destination has contributed to NASA's many successes. NASA must continue to have a mission driven focus. To the maximum extent practicable, we should engage our international partners in formulating common destinations for human and robotic missions.

Balanced Space Program – We must have a balanced space program. This means human space flight that includes a safe and reliable vehicle, Earth and space scientific exploration, and aeronautics research and technology development. These objectives must be appropriately balanced in any future authorization or appropriations legislation.

Scientific Utilization of Human Space Flight – The primary purpose of space exploration must continue to be science. We must maximize our current and future scientific assets in low earth orbit and beyond. This includes the extension of the International Space Station (ISS), which should be re-supplied with cargo by commercial

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vehicles. As we witnessed with the Hubble Space Telescope, a human space flight program dedicated to the advancement of science yields truly extraordinary results for the United States and the entire world.

Workforce Transition – The retirement of the Space Shuttle should proceed as planned in 2011 after ISS assembly is complete, and any future direction must include a plan to maintain critical skills and incorporate lessons learned from our previous efforts to replace the Shuttle, and to soften any job dislocation impacts.

Taxpayer Protection – Any future plan for NASA must protect taxpayers from cost overruns and boondoggles. We must ensure strict accountability, oversight and management over all NASA programs to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not wasted and that we avoid the old NASA scenarios of cost overruns and missed deadlines.

Finally, as I prepare for our appropriations hearing on NASA's fiscal year 2011 budget, I also wanted to share with you some key questions I plan to ask the Administration:

- Where are we going, when will we get there, and what will it take?
- How will we protect the taxpayers?
- Is it the intention to scrap everything and start over?
- If so, what is the plan to mitigate job dislocation?
- How will the plan protect investments in Earth and space science and aeronautics proposed in the 2011 budget request and in the years ahead?

I look forward to our continued cooperation in support of America's space program.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

cc: Senator Jay Rockefeller