

Statement on the Passing of President George H.W. Bush

“When it comes to space in general, and commercial space in particular, George H.W. Bush was always a loyal friend, a strong advocate, and a visionary leader. As Vice President, he reached out personally to the Challenger families to offer his help and support. He was also a true believer in STEM education and even served as the Honorary Chair of the Challenger Center.

As President, he established the National Space Council and signed out an updated National Space Policy. His speech at the National Air and Space Museum on the 20th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing laid out a plan that we are just now embracing, almost 30 years later. Perhaps he was a little ahead of his time, but his proposal for a long-term continuing commitment to build a space station, go back to the moon (this time to stay), and then carry out a manned mission to Mars, laid out a framework for the United States and our international partners to follow in the decades ahead, as part of our exploration of the solar system.

During his Presidency, the U.S. and the Soviet Union agreed to exchange flights by astronauts and cosmonauts on the Mir space station and the Space Shuttle that made possible the collaboration needed to enable the successful construction and operation of the International Space Station. In addition, the very first FAA-licensed commercial launches, totaling 31 in all, took place while he was in office.

In 1998, in recognition of his many contributions and his leadership in the space arena, he was named as the winner of the National Space Trophy from the Rotary National Award for Space Achievement Foundation, the only President ever to receive that award.”

- Dr. George C. Nield, Former FAA Associate Administrator for Commercial Space Transportation