

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: NASA Space Launch System and Orion

Dear Mr. President,

We are writing to express our strong support for a safe, focused and expeditious return of American astronauts to deep space exploration on an American rocket launched from American soil. Congress has done its part in helping to codify a future deep space exploration architecture in the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 (PL 111-267), and has followed with a robust funding commitment, as most recently expressed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014. We are concerned, however, about the impact of shifting priorities for NASA and the resulting mixed signals this sends relative to the United States' dedication and commitment to its leadership role in human deep spaceflight exploration. We urge you to chart and clearly state a vision and timeline for the nation in deep space exploration.

Since the early 1960s, the U.S. has benefitted greatly from the technological advancements, global space leadership and inspiration that result from NASA's human spaceflight program. The achievements in science and technology that we have derived from human space exploration are crucial in advancing our nation's innovation agenda, and the discoveries yet to be made inspire our future scientists and explorers to pursue studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education.

We must prioritize U.S. leadership in space exploration, especially in light of the expansion of human spaceflight programs in countries such as China and Russia over the past decade. As NASA and their industry partners develop the capabilities to explore further out into the frontier of space, our nation derives countless benefits in terms of technological advancements. Systems and technologies developed for our human space exploration program have resulted in technological leaps in the fields of medicine, transportation, public safety, computer technology, communications, energy efficiency, and manufacturing productivity. The technological advancements that result from these programs have direct civilian and military

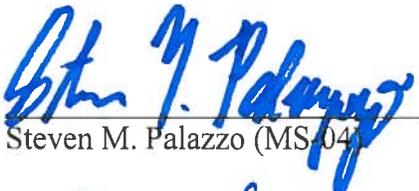
applications. In addition to the threat to our civilian preeminence in space, the increasing efforts of other countries to develop human spaceflight capabilities may also threaten U.S. national security. As a nation, with focus and vision, we will retain our position on the leading edge of exploration beyond Earth orbit.

Without significant growth in our technical workforce in this decade, the U.S. will languish and our economy will continue to suffer. Human spaceflight has inspired millions of students to enter scientific and technical fields of study, more than any other technological endeavor in U.S. history. As the human spaceflight industry expands, employment opportunities increase, prompting an increase in STEM education enrollment. We have the opportunity and the responsibility to inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, and explorers.

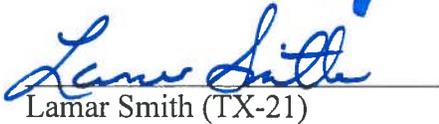
It has been often stated that NASA’s funding is an investment, not an expenditure. As you are aware, total investment in the agency is less than one half of one percent of the overall federal budget, and less than half of the agency’s budget goes toward human spaceflight. Therefore, less than one-fourth of one penny of each taxpayer dollar is invested in human spaceflight—but the rewards are substantial.

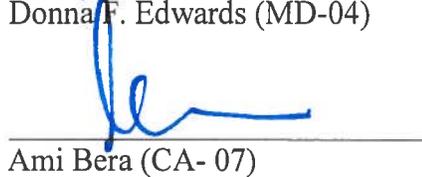
We look forward to working with the Administration to strengthen human spaceflight exploration in our budget commitment. Working together, we can chart a course for space exploration worthy of our great nation.

Sincerely,


Steven M. Palazzo (MS-04)


Donna F. Edwards (MD-04)


Lamar Smith (TX-21)


Ami Bera (CA- 07)


Mo Brooks (AL-05)

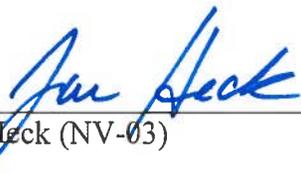

Corrine Brown (FL-05)


Pete Olson (TX-22)

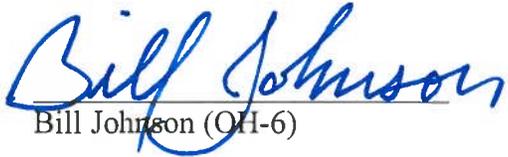

Elijah Cummings (MD-07)


Tom McClintock (CA-4)


Dina Titus (NV-01)


Joe Heck (NV-03)


Frederica S. Wilson (FL-24)


Bill Johnson (OH-6)

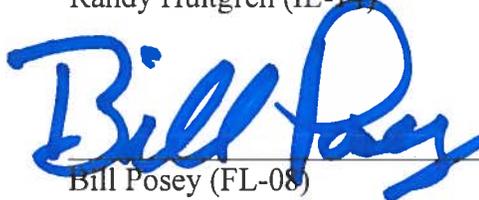

Joseph P. Kennedy, III (MA-04)


Gregg Harper (MS-03)


Bennie G. Thompson (MS-02)


Randy Hultgren (IL-14)


Suzan DelBene (WA-01)


Bill Posey (FL-08)


Mark Takano (CA-41)


Mike Fitzpatrick (PA-08)


Julia Brownley (CA-26)


Alan Nunnelee (MS-01)

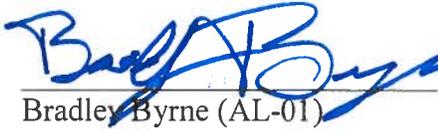

Mike Honda (CA-17)


Ken Calvert (CA-42)


Ed Perlmutter (CO-07)

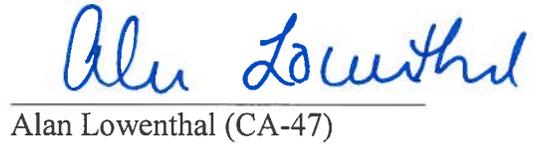

Leonard Lance (NJ-07)


Alan Grayson (FL-09)


Bradley Byrne (AL-01)


Elizabeth Esty (CT-05)


Derek Kilmer (WA-06)


Alan Lowenthal (CA-47)