

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-2404

March 22, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Office of the Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Office of the Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

I write regarding the actions that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) needs to prevent furloughs for any NASA contractors impacted by center shutdowns or program limitations as the country addresses this national emergency regarding COVID-19. NASA contractors – through no fault of their own or the agency – face dire economic and financial consequences when they are restricted from conducting their regular work on a NASA center or program and may be limited or unable, due to the nature of their work, to do so through a telework alternative. The nation's space workforce and the critical expertise that our contractor workforce provides is largely irreplaceable, we must work together to prevent these impacts.

As you may know, NASA's Space Launch System (SLS) is currently housed at Stennis Space Center on Mississippi's gulf coast. There are thousands of NASA contractors at Stennis focused on the work of preparing SLS for the critical testing benchmark called "the Green Run". The contractors located at Stennis, and at NASA centers across the nation, cannot afford to indefinitely pay their workers if they are not receiving payments from their NASA contracts. Although contracts are generally adjusted following a shutdown of work, we simply cannot afford to let these financial realities play out to the detriment of contractors and workers alike and wait for the conclusion of this national emergency to address the consequences. I urge you to authorize and empower NASA programs and centers to continue funding current contractor work using already appropriated fiscal year 2020 funds. Thus, preventing furloughs or layoffs that would only compound the economic suffering of this emergency and also endanger our future space missions and private sector commercial space partnerships due to the potential loss of critical talent.

As you work with the Senate to finalize the CARES Act, I urge you to enable all NASA contractor employees to continue to be paid using previously approved fiscal year 2020 appropriations. I stand ready to work with you to resolve these issues. Thank you for your efforts to address this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steven Palazzo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and the last name "Palazzo" clearly legible.

Steven M. Palazzo
Member of Congress

Cc: NASA Administrator, The Honorable Jim Bridenstine