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BAHEP president testifies before Senate subcommittee on importance of ISS funding beyond 2024

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership has been an avid supporter of NASA, and specifically of the missions of the NASA Johnson Space Center, for decades. Elected officials and the media often consult with BAHEP President Bob Mitchell to share his expertise in regard to the aerospace industry.

In May 2018, Sen. Ted Cruz, chairman of the Space, Science, and Competitiveness Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation invited Mitchell to provide testimony before his subcommittee regarding the International Space Station.

Given just five minutes to state his support for federal funding for the ISS beyond 2024, Mitchell testified before the subcommittee on June 6, 2018. Following is his testimony in full.

“Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Nelson, distinguished members of the committee:

“Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and to testify on the important topic of the International Space Station.

“I serve as the president of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, a member-driven, 501(c)(6) nonprofit economic development organization located just outside the gates of the Johnson Space Center in Bay Area Houston.

“We have over 268 members, which include a diverse mix of businesses in aerospace, medical, life sciences, petrochemicals, and maritime. We also are proud to work on initiatives that contribute to the economic growth of the 13 cities and two counties in the area around the Johnson Space Center. Although aerospace companies make up a fraction of our membership, the entire business community understands and values the contributions of NASA and the space community in making all of our lives better.

“The ISS is a critical element of the work performed in Houston at the Johnson Space Center and the backbone to maintaining a number of key elements of our success in human spaceflight: the astronaut corps, mission control, countless technical resources, and world-class researchers.

“The Johnson Space Center offers an unparalleled national capability that has been built over decades of experience. The loss of or weakening of its capabilities would have dramatic implications to our outcomes in deep space exploration.

“The ROI on the ISS can be calculated in many ways. It is difficult to quantify the exact dollar value of many of these returns, but the overall impact is undeniable. The International Space Station – by its design and enactment – has established the foundation for sustained generation of technology that improves life on earth. Each year, spinoffs like new drugs, materials, and scientific technology become licensed and begin generating new



On June 6, 2018, BAHEP President Bob Mitchell testified before the Space, Science, and Competitiveness Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on the importance of funding the International Space Station beyond 2024.

revenue streams for companies large and small.

“Beyond the ability to show an ROI, ISS positions us to tackle the challenge of deep space by buying down cost and risk now to give missions to the Moon and Mars a head start. The station is a critical, inexpensive test bed for exploration hardware that needs to work perfectly on its first live mission. It allows us to test, tweak, and perfect life

support systems, radiation abatement methods, and other advanced materials. These breakthroughs will eventually make it from the launch pad into our homes and businesses across America.

“Through engagement with the Russian space agency and 13 other ISS partners, the U.S. has led an era of peaceful collaboration and exploration that has provided stability in

space leading to the current level of space commercialization. This commitment to ISS – uninterrupted for the last 25 years – has provided more than just a destination in space. The ISS has cultivated:

- A cultural learning lab for diplomacy, education, and inspiration
- A learning lab for technology applications – testing performance

machines, materials, and humans in space.

- A science lab for comparing terrestrial knowledge in a new frontier of weightlessness
- A lab for exploring both our earth and outer space in preparation for the next exploration endeavors

“I think it is important to take a detailed look at the overall ISS budget, which is often cited at \$3B per year. What is misleading about that estimate is that the Commercial Crew and Cargo programs are funded out of those funds along with overhead costs at the centers housing the programs and other expenses.

“The real ISS budget is a fraction of that total cost, ranging from \$1B - \$1.5B/year. Saving this much each year will have a minimal impact on our overall exploration efforts in terms of a funds transfer. Commercial alternatives would likely cost significantly more than sustaining the ISS, essentially creating an entirely new development program, while providing a fraction of the existing capabilities.

“If the U.S. government terminates its support of the ISS in 2025, and we step away from ISS before an equivalent long-term engagement is created, there will be a disruption in the space program and the emerging commercial space industry.

“Not very long ago, NASA’s Constellation Program was cancelled at the same time as the retirement of the Space Shuttle Program, which had a profoundly negative impact on America’s leadership position in space. I sincerely hope that we all learned a valuable lesson from this and trust that you will not allow history to repeat itself! My position is that the U.S. government should commit to the ISS for as long as it is safely feasible to do so.

“However, as we succeed, others look to follow. As you have probably seen, just last week China invited other nations to partner with them on their space station. They realize, as we do, the power of these partnerships and the leadership and the technology that can be gained from them.

“As we question our commitment to the future of ISS, the Chinese space program is actively seeking to leverage this moment in time to provide an alternative path and platform for our traditional international partners in space. This has very serious implications for our national security, trade and technology partnerships, and leadership if this is not managed carefully.

“At the end of the day, the ISS program is the culmination of all of the reasons we are so passionate about the entire space program – it represents America’s future in global leadership, education, innovation, healthcare, and our quality of life.

“Thank you for the invitation to speak on this topic, and I look forward to your questions.”

Delegation makes 396 congressional office visits to advance support for human space exploration

On May 15, 2018, the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership embarked on its 27th annual trip to Washington, D.C., leading a Citizens for Space Exploration delegation to help advance support for human space exploration by demonstrating a large, grassroots constituency.

The delegation included 91 travelers, representing 26 states, who conducted 396 congressional office visits over the course of two days.

The diverse group of travelers included elected officials, 35 students study-

ing engineering or related technical fields, industry representatives, and community leaders.

Local elected officials attending the trip included State Rep. Dennis Paul, City of Houston Councilman Dave Martin, City of League City Councilman Larry Millican, City of Nassau Bay



BAHEP President Bob Mitchell enjoys comments made by Sen. John Cornyn during the Congressional Reception.

BAHEP welcomes Alpha Space

Alpha Space Test & Research Alliance, LLC (Alpha Space) owns and operates the Materials International Space Station Experiment (MISSE) Flight Facility, an orbiting commercial science facility permanently installed on the exterior of the International Space Station.

Alpha Space, a woman- and minority-owned company, serves the space research, testing, and materials science communities with turn-key, fixed-price services that make getting science and test elements into space, and back, as simple and inexpensive as possible. MISSE provides unparalleled access for passive and active tests and experiments in the extreme environment of low earth orbit, including continuous on-orbit data collection. Experiments are flown and retrieved every six months using robotically installed carriers and are controlled from Alpha Space’s payload operations control center in Houston.

Bob Mitchell, president of the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, stated, “Although Alpha

Space was recently founded in 2015, I have known its principals for many years and hold them in the highest regard. They are consummate professionals, and I am very pleased to welcome Alpha Space to the organization.”

Stephanie Murphy is the principal owner and board chair of Alpha Space. She also currently serves as the executive board chair of MEI Technologies, Inc. (MEIT), an advanced technology company. Alpha Space President and CEO Mark Gittleman will represent the company within BAHEP. Prior to joining Alpha Space, he was the executive vice president of Intuitive Machines, LLC and a long-time executive with Oceanering International, Inc.

Gittleman said, “The commercial space industry is evolving so fast right now. I think that Alpha Space and MISSE are the right company and right service to help the industry,

Houston, and NASA continue to move toward commercial operations in low earth orbit. BAHEP has a rich history of supporting the aerospace community, and I look forward to a continued, mutually beneficial relationship with this great organization.”

Alpha Space employees have a long, successful track record with prior MISSE missions through work performed under MEIT. Through MEIT’s legacy

contracts of over 20 years, Alpha Space personnel have safely and successfully integrated over 300 fully and experiment packages for deployment on the ISS and Space Shuttle through the MISSE-1 through MISSE-8 missions.

Alpha Space is located at 930 Gemini Ave. in Houston. To learn more, visit www.alphaspace.com or call 832.915.5401.



Alpha Space
Test & Research Alliance

Councilwoman Ashley Graves, and City of Seabrook Councilman Joe Machol.

Key messages presented

Key messages included continuity for NASA human space exploration programs, funding of the missions set forth in the 2017 NASA Authorization Act, and NASA’s role in supporting American leadership, education, innovation, health care, and quality of life for half of one percent of the national budget.

Talking points also included concern about challenges to U.S. leadership in space, support for the continued utilization of the International Space Station beyond 2024, and the importance of restoring U.S. space launch capabilities to support human space flight.

The Citizens for Space Exploration hosted a Congressional Reception on May 16th where Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX-36), Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX-22), and Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO-6) made remarks to the group of proactive citizens.

BAHEP will lead the CSE delegation on its 28th annual trip to Washington on May 20-22, 2019.

BUSINESS to BUSINESS is a monthly Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership publication in partnership with THE DAILY NEWS. BAHEP is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeastern Texas. Its members include more than 265 business partners encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, the Houston Airport System, and Port Houston. For membership information, contact Membership Director Harriet Pilgrim at 832.536.3250.

Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
18045 Saturn Lane
Houston, TX 77058
832.536.3255

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