



News release

Contact: Kathryn Cooper
Communications Manager
P.O. Box 58724
Houston, Texas 77258-8724
Phone: 281.486.5535
Fax: 281.486.5068
Email: kathryn@bayareahouston.com
Visit: www.bayareahouston.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2010

America can't afford to abandon human spaceflight

BAY AREA HOUSTON, TEXAS – The very real possibility exists that within the next two decades, or less, the Russians, Indians or Chinese will be smiling down at Earth from their lunar outpost while aggressively forging a path to Mars and beyond. America's complacency about its current leadership role in space exploration has laid the groundwork for this to happen. The time to sit up and take notice is now, not after these other countries capture the next "high ground."

When the presidential administration released its 2011 budget on Feb. 1, funding for NASA's Constellation Program was nowhere to be found. Constellation is America's human spaceflight program which succeeds the retirement of the aging space shuttle orbiters later this year. Displaying incredible ingenuity, many of America's brightest engineers have poured their heart and soul into the program with proven results – let me repeat – *proven results*. If human spaceflight is allowed to be dismantled, it will be a national tragedy and will place this country in unnecessary jeopardy.

If not overturned by Congress, the decision to dismantle the human spaceflight program will be devastating to the nation. With the closure of small businesses and the further loss of jobs, tax revenues will be reduced and real estate values will continue to decline across the nation, which will affect our cities' infrastructure projects as well as our independent school districts. The education of our children, the future of our communities will suffer. Is this what we want?

Specific objectives missing

In defending the administration's decision to throw Constellation onto the scrap heap, the NASA leadership, Administrator Charlie Bolden and his deputy, Lori Garver, have stated that President Obama's budget is launching NASA on an ambitious effort that includes an enhanced focus on commercial partnerships. They have spoken in generalized terms without giving specific objectives or goals or defining a mission even when asked directly on many occasions to

provide them. Administrator Bolden has been quoted as saying, “Flying beyond Earth’s orbit may not happen until the year 2030.” By Americans, that is.

Supporting the commercial spaceflight industry is not a bad thing. In fact, we need to provide seed money to help them be successful in low Earth orbit, allowing NASA to focus its efforts on “the bigger picture.” However, it is not in the best interests of this nation to put an end to NASA’s human spaceflight program for the foreseeable future while providing billions of dollars to these commercial entities to get “**up to speed.**”

To date, not one of these commercial companies has provided any evidence that they have the ability to take a crew and cargo to the International Space Station. The one commercial company that is the closest to this is Elon Musk’s SpaceX. They are two years behind schedule after spending \$200,000,000 plus of taxpayers’ dollars. It is worth mentioning that, of the four tests of their propulsion system, on Falcon 1, three were failures. They have yet to show evidence of a crew capsule, launch abort system or recovery system, which all appear to be closer to a dream than reality for SpaceX without additional taxpayers’ dollars.

National leadership at risk

As stated previously, the demise of human spaceflight would be a national tragedy. Importantly, as a nation, we should make the decision to strengthen our position as the world’s leader in human spaceflight. This goes much deeper than bragging rights. Pride in NASA and its mission has inspired generations of young scientists and engineers. Even more significantly, our ability to maintain leadership in space has kept America safe and ***in control*** of our destiny. America is slowly giving up its technological advantage to countries which are advancing their human space programs. Is this what we want as a nation?

We, the people, must send a clear message to Congress. The time for complacency is over. We have to sit up and take notice. Reinstate our human spaceflight program, and provide adequate funding to NASA so that it can continue on its journey. Keep America as the world leader.

Bob Mitchell
President
Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership
281.486.5535

The Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership is a member-driven organization that provides the leadership to stimulate regional economic development and employment in southeast Texas. Its members include more than 260 investor companies, business professionals, local governments, and educational institutions encompassing 13 cities, Galveston and Harris counties, and the Port of Houston Authority. Visit www.bayareahouston.com.

Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program is administered by the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership. It is a State of Texas funded initiative designed to transfer the knowledge and technology of the U.S. Space Program to small businesses to solve technical challenges they are unable to solve themselves. Visit www.spacetechnologies.com/bahep.