

2016 Citizens for Space Exploration Congressional Visits Report (May 24-26, 2016)

Trip Summary

The 2016 CSE Congressional visits were a success and helped advance support for human space exploration and demonstrate a large, grassroots constituency for space exploration. The 25th annual trip included 89 travelers, representing 23 states, who conducted a record 407 Congressional office visits (up from the 376 in '15). The diverse group of travelers included elected officials, 38 university students majoring in engineering or related technical fields of study, industry representatives and community leaders. The Congressional reception was well attended by over 50 staffers, and included remarks from 4 Members of Congress.

A few interesting statistics from our meeting feedback surveys include:

- 82% House visits, 18% Senate. Members were present at 17% of the meetings.
- 77% were “very engaged” in the meeting.
- 149 staffers had visited a NASA center.
- 81% were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about NASA’s exploration programs.
- 85% of staffers were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about the benefits derived from the space program – Education was mentioned in 72% of meetings, economic benefits in 40%, spinoffs in 45%, and exploration/discovery in 36%.
- 71% of visits were considered “very supportive” and 22% “somewhat supportive” of human space exploration.
- Specific concerns focused around funding and budgets in the future and potential changes after the election.

Visits overview

Each team consisted of a leader and 2-3 other travelers including at least one student. The teams visited Congressional offices of their home states, discussed the exploration programs, and solicited feedback from the office concerning the value and direction concerning America’s space exploration program.

Teams also provided folders that included:

- Citizens for Space Exploration overview document
- Deep Space Exploration Incremental Approach 1-pager
- ISS Research 1-pager
- Space Exploration Spinoffs 1-pager
- NASA budget pie chart
- State-specific document with NASA funds spent in that state
- Explore, Pioneer, and Innovate 1 pager

Key Messages included continuity for NASA human space exploration programs through the upcoming presidential administration transition, and NASA’s role in supporting American leadership, education, innovation, health care, and quality of life for less than half of one percent of the budget. Talking points

also included concern about challenges to U.S. leadership in space, and the importance of restoring U.S. space launch capabilities to support human space flight.

Team members discussed their specific personal reasons for support for America's space program. For example:

- A healthy space program is important to inspire students and get them into STEM careers.
- What is happening in space exploration is important to the economy and to business.
- NASA is an important investment and provides a wide range of spinoff benefits.
- Human space exploration enhances American leadership, education, technological innovation and competitiveness.

Kick-Off Reception – Tuesday, May 24, 2016

Brian Freedman emceed the program in his role as the trip chairman. Speakers included Robert Lightfoot (NASA Associate Administrator), Nick Cummings (Senate Commerce Committee), Mary Lynne Dittmar (Dittmar Associates, Executive Director, Coalition for Deep Space Exploration), Joe Mayer (CSE Chair), and Kelly Page (Texas Team Coordinator). Topics covered included CSE history, Hill do's and don'ts, a space industry update, a legislative update, and a run-through of the drop-off materials and key messages. Following the meeting, each team met, strategized and planned for the following two days of visits.

Congressional Reception – Wednesday, May 25, 2016

The Citizens for Space Exploration hosted a Congressional reception for Members of Congress and their staff. Four Congressional Members spoke at the reception and over 50 staff attended. Congressional speakers were:

- Mo Brooks (R-AL-5)
- Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18)
- Robert Aderholt (R-AL-4)
- Mike Coffman (R-CO-6)

Feedback

Some key feedback received from the teams:

- Strong bipartisan support for NASA. There was more understanding of NASA's space exploration programs than in previous years and support for Mars as the ultimate destination.
- There was strong interest in lunar related missions as the next step to Mars.
- There was strong support for NASA to stay the course on the human space programs, especially into the new administration.
- There is increase awareness overall of the elements of NASA's exploration programs.
- Less evidence of tension between the commercial and government elements of human space exploration and growing recognition of mutual benefits derived from those programs.
- Recognition of the benefits resulting from the space program including areas of STEM education, work force development and general contributions to local economies across the country (including small businesses).
- Response to our platform of ISS, Orion, SLS, and Commercial Crew/Cargo was very positive.
- The budget is always a challenge.
- NASA and industry will have to continuously make the case for the value of spaceflight.
- Many staffers asked to be contacted when a specific vote or action was needed.