

April 12, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President, United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The United States of America and NASA have repeatedly captured the world's imagination with the greatest feats of human determination, technological innovation and engineering excellence the world has ever known. Our efforts in the conquest of space have been a major contributor to our position as a world leader, not only because of the scientific advancements they have afforded us, but because of the sheer nobility of our mission. When Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders circled the moon during the Apollo 8 mission and sent back the first images of Earth, the world was changed forever! People realized, even if just for a moment, that national boundaries were just artificial lines on a map and that we're all linked by our humanity and our insignificance compared to the vastness of the universe.

The people of NASA and the private industries that have made the hundreds of achievements in space possible need your help and leadership to continue mankind's greatest adventure. Human spaceflight operations are vital to our nation's security, economic vitality and protection of our role as a world leader in technological innovation.

Due to the proposed upcoming retirement of our nation's space shuttle fleet and program, coupled with the recent cancellation of the Constellation program, your administration's commitment to our nation's overall human spaceflight endeavor, as well as tens of thousands of jobs related to the space industry in Florida and across the country, are in question. We urge you to quickly and decisively affirm your administration's support of our nation's human spaceflight operations, especially those based here in Florida.

While we are encouraged by the announcement of an additional \$6 billion dollars over the next five years for NASA and related activities, we have serious concerns over the lack of clarity and definition of goals that we feel are obstacles to the implementation of any coherent program. Specifically, we urge you to develop a clear and cohesive plan centered on the goals and principles listed below.

- 1) **Eliminate the "Gap" Between the Shuttle Program and the Next Generation of Crew Vehicle** – The United States has invested more than \$9 billion in the Constellation Program. We encourage you to identify the best components of this program and combine them with existing heavy-lift technologies to ensure *manned spaceflight continues in Florida as quickly as possible*. This could be in the form of *continued* shuttle flights (there is the extra "rescue" shuttle and there are components for four more rocket engines and boosters for a total of 5 more shuttle flights) beyond the planned retirement date, a new system based on shuttle technologies or a next-generation system based on the hybridization of existing and new technologies. A long-term gap in programming will cause the loss of the existing specialized workforce, will increase future costs of developing a new workforce, and will devastate the Florida communities that have, for generations, served the space program. *This is unacceptable to the people of Florida and Florida's business community*. To extend the shuttle for two more years will add billions of dollars to your space budget, but it is necessary in order to protect America's vital national security interests at a time when we can least afford not to do so.
- 2) **Protect Existing Investments in Florida** – Florida has the infrastructure necessary to quickly adapt to the development of new human spaceflight activities. We urge you to protect the investments already made to develop this infrastructure. A federal investment of \$2 billion for a 21st century spaceport designed and implemented at Kennedy Space Center (KSC) will help ensure that our nation is uniquely situated to capitalize on future space endeavors and is the best chance for preserving as many jobs as possible. Additionally, if the United States is going to spend \$7.8 billion on space exploration technology advancements, then your administration must provide more specific details so that Florida and KSC understand their prospects for the future. If your administration decides that the continuation of low earth orbit technology will be part of its plan, then the final integration of the spacecraft *must* be at KSC to fully utilize the investments already made in people and infrastructure.

- 3) **Maximize the Effectiveness of the Commercial Space Industry** – We agree with your proposal that there exists incredible opportunities for public/private partnerships in the future of our nation’s space exploration activities. These partnerships will help the nation meet its goals in space exploration by spurring innovation, increasing capital, and developing a broader infrastructure for the future. We fully support these activities to continue in ways that foster lifelong space technology development careers that provide high wages, access to health care, job security, and opportunities for training and personal development. This will help ensure we have the workforce to move forward and serve as a positive economic engine for the area communities. In the near-term, American commercial enterprises are uniquely situated to assist with low earth orbit operations, such as supplying the International Space Station.
- 4) **Maximize State Partnerships** – Florida is united in our determination to keep KSC and other facilities at the center of our nation’s human spaceflight activities. This determination has created an outstanding and strengthening partnership between state leaders, Florida’s business community, and organized labor. This partnership, in conjunction with Space Florida, has numerous specific programming ideas and solutions for addressing the needs of our nation’s space program, the perils facing our state after the retirement of the shuttle, and the building of strong public/private partnerships for the future.

On behalf of Space Florida, the Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast, the Florida AFL-CIO and Associated Industries of Florida, we pledge to support your efforts to build the future of manned spaceflight, which is a critical component of Florida’s economy and an integral part of our state’s identity. Floridians statewide are united and committed to supporting the space goals of our nation and the growth of the aerospace industry in our great state. We implore you to outline the specific steps you would take to support KSC and the thousands of incredibly skilled workers that have always made Florida the capital of manned space flight for our nation. President John F. Kennedy committed this nation in the 1960’s to always being on the forefront of space because he knew that it would insure that the world would be a safer place for all. America cannot cede space to other nations without risking our own hard-fought national security and perhaps even the future of mankind.

Sincerely,



Frank DiBello
President
Space Florida



Lynda Weatherman
President & Chief Executive Officer
*Economic Development Commission
of Florida's Space Coast*



Mike Williams
President
Florida AFL-CIO



Barney T. Bishop, III
President & Chief Executive Officer
Associated Industries of Florida