

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

Dear President Obama;

America is faced with the near-simultaneous ending of the Shuttle program and your recent budget proposal to cancel the Constellation program. This is wrong for our country for many reasons. We are very concerned about America ceding its hard earned global leadership in space technology to other nations. We are stunned that, in a time of economic crisis, this move will force as many as 30,000 irreplaceable engineers and managers out of the space industry. We see our human exploration program, one of the most inspirational tools to promote science, technology, engineering and math to our young people, being reduced to mediocrity. NASA's human space program has inspired awe and wonder in all ages by pursuing the American tradition of exploring the unknown. We strongly urge you to drop this misguided proposal that forces NASA out of human space operations for the foreseeable future.

For those of us who have accepted the risk and dedicated a portion of our lives to the exploration of outer space, this is a terrible decision. Our experiences were made possible by the efforts of thousands who were similarly dedicated to the exploration of the last frontier. Success in this great national adventure was predicated on well defined programs, an unwavering national commitment, and an ambitious challenge. We understand there are risks involved in human space flight, but they are calculated risks for worthy goals, whose benefits greatly exceed those risks.

America's greatness lies in her people: she will always have men and women willing to ride rockets into the heavens. America's challenge is to match their bravery and acceptance of risk with specific plans and goals worthy of their commitment. NASA must continue at the frontiers of human space exploration in order to develop the technology and set the standards of excellence that will enable commercial space ventures to eventually succeed. Canceling NASA's human space operations, after 50 years of unparalleled achievement, makes that objective impossible.

One of the greatest fears of any generation is not leaving things better for the young people of the next. In the area of human space flight, we are about to realize that fear; your NASA budget proposal raises more questions about our future in space than it answers.

Too many men and women have worked too hard and sacrificed too much to achieve America's preeminence in space, only to see that effort needlessly thrown away. We urge you to demonstrate the vision and determination necessary to keep our nation at the forefront of human space exploration with ambitious goals and the proper resources to see them through. This is not the time to abandon the promise of the space frontier for a lack of will or an unwillingness to pay the price.

Sincerely, in hopes of continued American leadership in human space exploration.

Walter Cunningham
Apollo 7

Chris Kraft
Past Director JSC

Jack Lousma
Skylab 3, STS 3

Vance Brand
Apollo-Soyuz, STS-5,
STS-41B, STS-35

Bob Crippen
STS-1, STS-7,
STS-41C, STS-41G
Past Director KSC

Michael D. Griffin
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Ed Gibson
Skylab 4

Jim Kennedy
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Alan Bean
Apollo 12, Skylab 3

Alfred M. Worden
Apollo 15

Scott Carpenter
Mercury Astronaut

Glynn Lunney
Gemini-Apollo Flight Director

Jim McDivitt
Gemini 4, Apollo 9
Apollo Spacecraft Program Manager

Gene Kranz
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Joe Kerwin
Skylab 2

Fred Haise
Apollo 13,
Shuttle Landing Tests

Gerald Carr
Skylab 4

Jim Lovell
Gemini 7, Gemini 12,
Apollo 8, Apollo 13

Jake Garn
STS-51D,
U.S. Senator

Charlie Duke
Apollo 16

Bruce McCandless
STS-41B, STS-31

Frank Borman
Gemini 7, Apollo 8

Paul Weitz
Skylab 2, STS-6

George Mueller
Past Associate Administrator
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Harrison Schmitt
Apollo 17,
U.S. Senator

Gene Cernan
Gemini 9, Apollo 10,
Apollo 17

Dick Gordon
Gemini 11, Apollo 12