



HUNTSVILLE

Tommy Battle
Mayor

February 1, 2010

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

Many would argue that putting a man on the moon was mankind's greatest scientific achievement. What will be mankind's next great achievement?

As mayor of Huntsville, Alabama, I feel that this is a timely and appropriate question when considering the actions taken toward the Constellation human space flight program in the proposed federal budget for the 2011 fiscal year.

As I'm sure you know, it is in Huntsville's DNA to be part of this nation's exploration of space. This community, along with scientists and engineers from through-out this country, have been part of the team to design, build, and fly rockets, carrying astronauts to earth orbit, the moon and I am confident one day to Mars. This team over these past fifty years has included thousands of men and women who call Huntsville home, and who have dedicated their lives to America's space program.

Throughout the generations of our space history, the NASA-Marshall team of civil servants and contractors has understood the challenges and the commitment to excellence that began as part of Dr. Von Braun's vision. Our fathers, our mothers, our sons, our daughters, our friends and colleagues understand the complex challenges of space travel. This is what we do. We go to work each day mindful of the inherit danger of space travel. We celebrate the accomplishments and we remember each and every tragedy. We dedicate ourselves to always and continuously work to make space travel as safe as we possibly can.

President John F. Kennedy challenged America's spirit and ingenuity - daring us to reach the moon. America rose to meet this challenge, and all mankind rallied around one of the most significant moments in human history. With the cuts to the Constellation program, and in particular to the Ares I rocket, I'm concerned that our spirit as a country, our ability to rise up and meet the most daunting of challenges is in danger of not only falling behind other countries, but also that we are in danger of diminishing that American spirit all-together.

The Star of Alabama

Over the past five decades NASA has assembled the greatest intellectual pool of scientists and engineers ever to be brought together. If that pool of talent is allowed to disburse it would take decades to re-assemble.

NASA has left its imprint on our community, our nation...on the moon - and on all mankind.

U.S. Senator Richard Shelby very accurately summarized NASA's work with Constellation, when he said:

"Constellation is the only path forward that maintains America's leadership in space. The successful test launch of the Ares I rocket in October represented years of work and great advancement in our Nation's human space flight program. To discard Ares I as the foundation of space exploration without demonstrated capability or proven superiority of an alternative vehicle, is irresponsible and not cost-effective. There is no other rocket today that is as safe, or that has successfully demonstrated it can meet the country's needs for the exploration of space."

While the domestic challenges facing our country are undoubtedly great, and while the world works tirelessly to meet and exceed the accomplishments of the American dream, I respectfully ask you to please, sir, not give up on the Constellation program. Doing so does not just negate the billions of dollars already invested in safe, manned space flight - canceling this program puts limits on the dreams of our country.

The challenges we are facing should not eliminate a future for our nation. These realities can instead inspire us to again meet the challenges we face head-on with a renewed sense of purpose. Neil Armstrong took one step that proved to be a giant leap for mankind. His one step forever gave proof that America's potential is limitless.

The United States has always prided itself on being a world leader. Space exploration has always been a national effort that instills pride in most Americans. I respectfully request that you re-think your proposed 2011 budget and give NASA the tools necessary to keep the United States a leader in space, exploration and technology.

I have no doubt that America's resolve, our ingenuity and that American spirit can still overcome the intractable. But for that to happen, our nation will look to you to challenge us - and to let it be known what that next great achievement, for all mankind, will be.

Sincerely,



Tommy Battle
Mayor
City of Huntsville, Alabama

