Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 14, 2011

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden,

The recent layoffs of thousands of highly skilled American workers supporting NASA's human spaceflight program should serve as a wake-up call to the Obama Administration that decisions are needed relative to our space launch system and overall human spaceflight implementation plan. Unfortunately, however, a majority of these layoffs are directly attributable to the Obama Administration not making NASA's human spaceflight program a priority in its budget requests to Congress, coupled with Agency leadership purposefully circumventing the will of Congress laid forth in the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-267), which President Obama signed into law in October 2010, and the Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011 (P.L 112-10).

The best and brightest engineers and technicians in human spaceflight are leaving in droves, and we are gravely concerned the Obama Administration will make it impossible to reconstitute the technical capabilities and industrial base necessary to carry out our legislated direction for NASA. We therefore strongly request that you stop studying and re-studying NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), as described in the NASA Authorization Act and the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution, and report to Congress on NASA's final plan for the SLS.

Congressional intent was clear on the alternatives and performance goals this system should have, and neither the Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle nor SLS was a dramatic departure from previously studied design alternatives. We commend NASA for their recent decision to utilize the Orion crew vehicle as the Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle (MPCV). However, there has been unnecessary delay and critical decisions are still pending. The SLS is to be based on Shuttle-and Constellation-derived systems and would be designed from inception and developed simultaneously with an upper stage to ensure the 130 metric ton heavy lift capacity. Early flight tests of the core booster could simultaneously provide the initial operating capability to return crew to the ISS by 2016 and provide the backup capability that Congress sought in case the Russian Soyuz or other options are unavailable. Again, the NASA Authorization of 2010 was clear on its intent.

NASA was further directed to make maximum use of existing contracts. Congress provided 90 days to report on this straight-forward Congressional direction, and we are now in our seventh month of waiting for NASA's plan. In the meantime, an SLS has not been announced, no contract modifications have been made, and Congressionally-approved funding

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has been withheld, which has forced NASA's industry partners to continue laying off workers. This situation is irresponsible, objectionable and incompliant with the law.

Our nation's leadership in space is of critical importance, and we have major concerns about our current state. Unfortunately, we do not see the same level of concern from the Obama Administration. The lack of prudent and responsive action to clear Congressional direction is unacceptable for the Agency. We respectfully request that you comply with the law and provide the requisite report to the Congress on NASA's plans for the SLS, as well as respond to continued inquiries without further delay.

Sincerely,

Pete Olson (TX-22)
Member of Congress

John Culberson (TX-07)
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop (UT-01)
Member of Congress

Mo Brooks (AL-05)
Member of Congress

Lamar Smith (TX-21)
Member of Congress

Bill Posey (FL-15)
Member of Congress

Sandy Adams (FL-24)
Member of Congress

cc: Jacob Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Paul Shawcross, Branch Chief, Science and Space, Office of Management and Budget
Dr. John Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy