

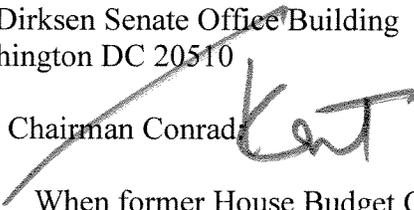
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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July 25, 2007

The Honorable Kent Conrad  
Chairman  
Committee on the Budget  
United States Senate  
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Conrad:

When former House Budget Committee Chairman James Nussle appears before the Committee on the Budget later this week for his confirmation hearing, I would respectfully request that you ask Mr. Nussle for his views on funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

As Chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee's Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, I have a strong interest in ensuring that nation's space and aeronautics programs are healthy and robust and able to achieve the goals the nation has set for them. In that regard, I am concerned about the growing mismatch between the resources being provided to NASA by the Administration and the tasks that NASA is asked to carry out.

The stresses caused by such budgetary practices are most evident in NASA's programs to implement the President's Vision for Space Exploration (VSE), which he announced with some fanfare in 2004. The VSE contained a series of ambitious and long-term goals for the nation's human space flight program. However, little new money has been provided by the Administration for the exploration initiative, which has led to significant cutbacks in funding for the utilization of the International Space Station, for development of the technologies that will be needed to enable future exploration activities, and for robotic exploration of the Moon. Even the Crew Exploration Vehicle, which is intended to replace the crew-carrying capabilities of the Shuttle, has not received the funds needed to minimize the looming multi-year gap in the nation's ability to get its astronauts into space after the Shuttle is retired.

This mismatch between the President's stated priorities and the Administration's funding of them is not unique to NASA's exploration program. NASA's grant-based research programs, as well as NASA's small- and medium-sized science missions, are exactly the types of activities called for in the President's American Competitiveness

Initiative. Yet, they have all suffered significant cutbacks in recent years. In addition, aeronautics R&D at NASA has not received funding commensurate with the goals stated in the President's recently released aeronautics policy, a reality that calls into question NASA's ability to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation's Next Generation Air Transportation System that will be so vital to the future health of our economy and our competitiveness.

Members of Congress with oversight responsibilities for NASA had hoped to discuss the mismatch between NASA funding and priorities with President Bush, but the White House declined our request for such a meeting. However, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget also plays a major role in determining the budgetary priorities of any Administration. If Mr. Nussle is confirmed, his views of NASA's programs and their relative importance will have a major impact on NASA's budgets for the remainder of this Administration. I think it is critically important that those views be subjected to the scrutiny of the Committee on the Budget during the course of his confirmation hearing.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



MARK UDALL  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Cc: Sen. Bill Nelson

Kent  
Thanks for  
taking a look  
at this!