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March 1, 2010

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Dr. Dennis Fife
20 North Main Street
Brigham City, UT 84302-2171

Dear Dr. Fife:

Thank you for writing regarding the future of NASA, particularly as it relates to the future of ATK. This issue is one of great importance to me and I welcome the opportunity to respond.

President Obama's FY 2011 budget proposal calls for an end to the Constellation program. I am very disappointed in the President's decision and will work to restore Constellation funding before the final FY 2011 budget resolution is approved. This country needs a clearly defined objective for accessing low-earth orbit and the International Space Station, and I am absolutely convinced that the Constellation program, which is composed of the Ares and Orion programs, is the best available option. We have already invested over four years and \$6 billion on the Ares I and Orion programs, and in October NASA conducted a very successful test flight of the Ares I-X rocket. The program is on track to deliver a safe, reliable rocket. Making changes to NASA's plan mid-stream should only be made if alternatives provide significant advantages in cost, schedule, performance, and safety. As of now, there are no credible alternatives.

In September 2009, members of the Utah delegation organized a meeting with NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden to convey our concerns with abandoning the current human spaceflight program. I conveyed to him in the strongest terms possible that changing course right now will devastate our industrial base and will cost thousands of critical jobs in Utah. After that meeting, I feel confident that he is at least aware of how important the Ares program is to Utah, and hope that he considers this when making recommendations to the president.


In January 2010, I joined with my colleagues in the Utah Congressional Delegation in sending a letter to Administrator Bolden stressing our commitment to Project Constellation and asking for his comments on the importance of this program. We reminded Administrator Bolden of the conclusion reached by NASA's Aerospace Safety and Advisory Panel that the design of Ares I is safe and to abandon Ares I was not cost effective.

Congress fully funded the development of the Ares I system in Fiscal Year 2010. I was pleased with this funding, which included a \$1 billion increasing in NASA funding over FY 2009's funding level. I am committed to ensuring that Constellation funding be restored to similar levels in the FY 2011 budget.

Through a consistent and concentrated effort, NASA has developed technology which has deepened our knowledge of the universe and opened the door to scientific innovations for our everyday lives. I take a special interest in the success of our space program. I believe if we are to maintain the scientific and technological advantage we have established, we must continue to provide the necessary funding for further innovation and development. As I stated, this program is of great importance to Utah and I will work to ensure that the Constellation project be funded in FY 2011.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert F. Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and "B".

Robert F. Bennett
United States Senator

RFB: rj