

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 20, 2012

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, and Science
H-309, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, and Science
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

As your Subcommittee works to craft the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2013, we urge your subcommittee to maintain the current appropriated level of \$1.2 billion for NASA's Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle. Despite the perception of an agreement among Congress, the Administration, and NASA, the President's request reduces Orion funding by \$172 million. We request that you maintain the FY 2012 appropriated levels in order to ensure timely return of American astronauts to space in American spacecraft.

The Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle is the next generation crew capsule for our astronauts to travel beyond low earth orbit. This program is a substantial undertaking which reinforces our nation's role as the world's leader in space exploration. NASA Administrator Bolden has categorized Orion as one of his top priorities and stated Orion will be the vehicle to take Americans to Mars. Orion is a program which will unite and inspire Americans as we explore farther than ever before, and therefore requires appropriate funding.

To date, Orion has successfully completed several critical tests, including the Launch Abort System Test, Vibro-Acoustic Test, and Water Landing Test. The capsule performed as predicted. In Fiscal Year 2014 Orion is scheduled to complete its Exploration Flight Test One, which will represent a significant advancement toward completion. To maintain this progress toward the critical on-orbit flight test, the scientists and engineers building Orion need stable funding.

We are very concerned the President's Budget request for Orion is a significant setback which will delay completion of the capsule for years. This request also deviates from the intent of Congress as captured in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2012 (PL 112-55). In this law, Congress and the Administration committed to fund Orion at \$1.2 billion for the coming years. The setback in the President's request will be a major disruption which surely will push completion to the right.

Finally, additional funding for Orion will reduce the period in which NASA astronauts rely on Russian spacecraft. Since the final Space Shuttle mission, the Russian space administration Roscosmos has had several notable failures. Progress 44, an unmanned Soyuz-U rocket carrying

nearly three tons of supplies for the International Space Station (ISS) and its crew, failed to reach orbit and crashed in West Siberia. And more recently, the Phobos-Grunt spacecraft destined for Mars failed to reach orbit and endangered millions of people with debris when it reentered the atmosphere. These Russian failures stand in stark contrast to Orion, which has demonstrated exemplary safety and functionality in all tests conducted thus far.

The United States is a nation of vision and exploration, and NASA's human space program embodies this American spirit better than any other. The timely completion of Orion is essential for this vision to live on. We again ask your subcommittee provide \$1.2 billion for this worthy purpose.

Sincerely,



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



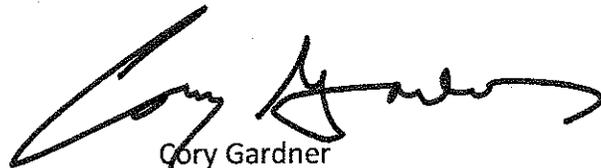
Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Mike Coffman
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress



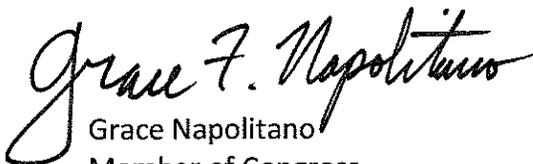
Cory Gardner
Member of Congress



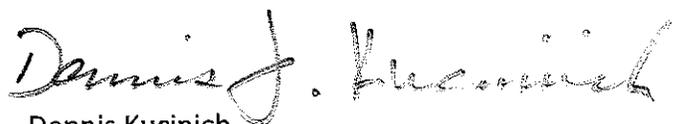
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