

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 25, 2011

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20546-0001

Dear Administrator Bolden:

We are writing to express our concern with a provision contained within the Air Force's FY2012 budget request for \$14 million to prepare and display the space shuttle Atlantis at the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio. We feel that it is vital to ensure that the Johnson Space Center is given equal and careful consideration in the selection process.

We are extremely concerned about this line-item contained within the Air Force's budget request. With the locations for the Space Shuttle orbiters still yet to be determined, requesting \$14,000,000 appears to be either premature or indicate that, despite the assurances from NASA, final decisions have already been made.

If a decision has been made in advance of the announcement, it was inappropriate and unfair to the other space communities to continue delays and uncertainty. In the event of a decision, it is critical that NASA closely follow the *National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2010* (P.L. 111-267) passed by Congress.

As you are aware, Section 603 of the *NASA Authorization Act* contained the following provision:

“The orbiter vehicles shall be made available and located for display and maintenance... with priority consideration given to eligible applicants meeting all conditions of that plan which would provide for the display and maintenance of orbiters at locations with the best potential value to the public, including where the location of the orbiters can advance educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines, and with an historical relationship with either the launch, flight operations, or processing of the Space Shuttle orbiters or the retrieval of NASA manned space vehicles, or significant contributions to human space flight.”

In addition to this clear mandate from Congress, NASA established its own specific criteria for the communities that want to receive and house a space shuttle orbiter. Each community must complete a thorough proposal to prove they can properly house an orbiter, and in Houston and other space communities, a specific Request For Information package was completed for the selection process that demonstrated financial ability and resources needed to undertake this project.

Unfortunately, NASA has repeatedly delayed the announcement of the chosen locations for permanent display of the space shuttle orbiters. The decision was expected last year and has not yet been made. This has created tremendous uncertainty for the communities, such as Houston, that are eligible as determined by both the NASA criteria and the requirements laid out by Congress in the NASA Authorization Act. This unnecessary delay is effectively hamstringing the organizations' abilities that

need to prepare for an orbiter arrival, as well as the communities' abilities to raise the significant amount of private funds needed for this project.

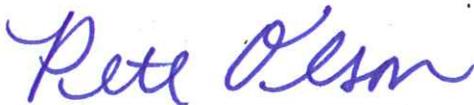
It is without question that Houston has played a unique and vital role in our nation's human space flight program. Training, planning, and mission control all occur at Johnson Space Center. However, the importance of Houston to manned space flight is not limited to NASA operations.

The city has a well known role in the story of America, and the story of Americans in space. At neighboring Rice University, President John F. Kennedy gave his famous speech announcing to the world that "we choose to go to the Moon". The Johnson Space Center control room is where the dreams of visiting school children are sparked and their imagination is allowed to flourish. In Houston exists the greatest aspirations of Americans past and present. It is a constant reminder to our country that we dared to explore the unexplored, and to not follow others into space, but to lead the world into space.

It is also important to note that along with its unmatched historical relationship to human space flight, Houston represents one of the best potential values to the public and will certainly advance educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. Greater Houston is home to over 6,000,000 people and is the fifth-largest metropolitan area in the country. Houston has one of the most significant connections to the human space flight program in the country and has the largest population of any of the eligible areas.

Houston is the rightful place for a Space Shuttle to be put on permanent display. It will continue Houston's legacy in human space flight, it will enrich the learning experiences of the children and adults alike who visit, and will inspire future generations. We hope that you will recognize both Houston's unique contribution to human space flight and its eligibility under the NASA Authorization Act by deciding to place one of the last orbiters at Johnson Space Center.

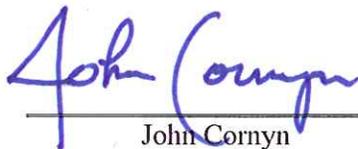
Sincerely,



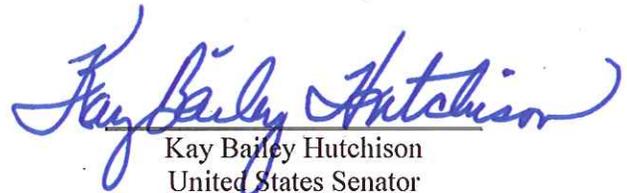
Pete Olson
Member of Congress



Gene Green
Member of Congress



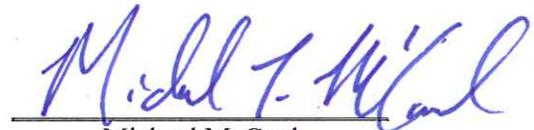
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Kay Bailey Hutchison
United States Senator



Joe Barton
Member of Congress



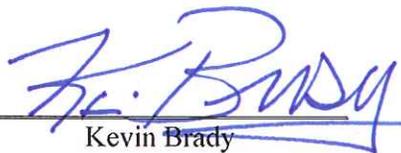
Michael McCaul
Member of Congress

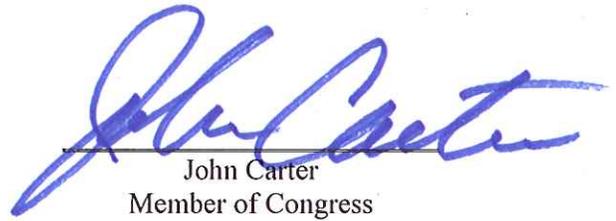


Lamar Smith
Member of Congress

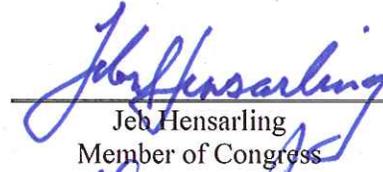


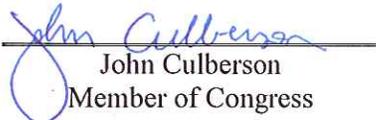
Michael Burgess
Member of Congress

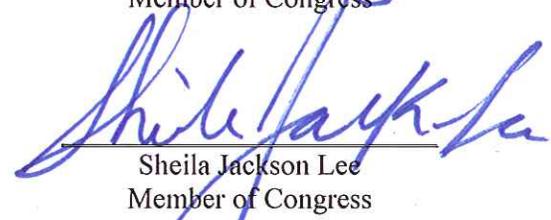

Kevin Brady
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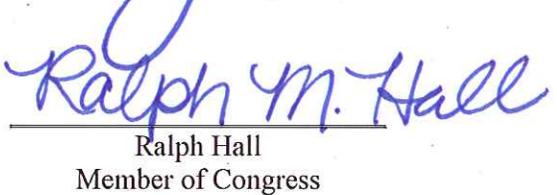

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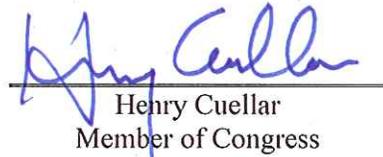

John Culberson
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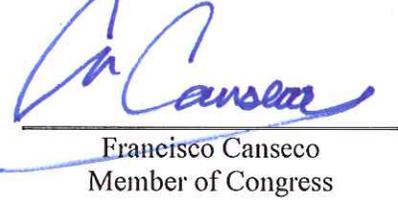

Sheila Jackson Lee
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Charles Gonzalez
Member of Congress

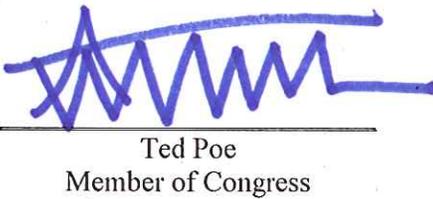

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Kay Granger
Member of Congress

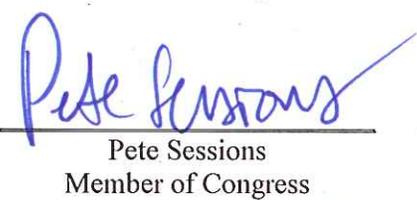

Henry Cuellar
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Francisco Canseco
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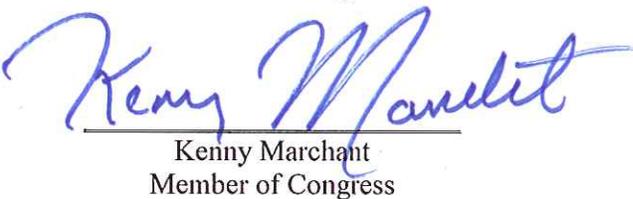

Michael Conaway
Member of Congress

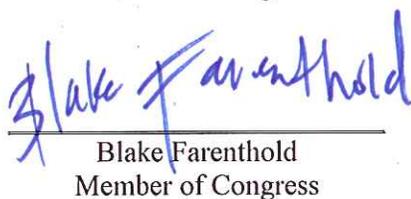

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Blake Farenthold
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