



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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October 4, 2007

Dear Senator,

I am writing regarding today's Senate consideration of HR 3093, the Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. NASA's biggest union, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), asks that you vote for this bill.

Fifty years ago today Americans were shown what happens when, as a Nation, we become complacent and content to reminisce about prior accomplishments. Sputnik became the ultimate metaphor for the fact that competitors, and even potential adversaries, are close on our heels ready to assert primacy over the high ground should we falter. President Kennedy responded swiftly and decisively to that serious challenge to our national prestige and security. More importantly, he backed up his eloquence with a NASA budget to match the daunting responsibility given to our Space Agency. Under his visionary leadership NASA redoubled its efforts and found its true destiny, showing the world that America would be the country to lead humanity forward into the Space Age.

Today, America faces new challenges and the threat to our world leadership in Aerospace has been exacerbated by the Columbia disaster. The talented men and women of NASA have once again redoubled their efforts and have been working diligently to recover from the ill-advised policy of relying, for so long, on a single aging spacecraft system for manned access exclusively to low-earth orbit. The President's proposed anemic FY08 budget is a betrayal of that noble effort, of these dedicated public servants, and ultimately of the American taxpayer.

Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Senator Shelby have crafted a strong bi-partisan bill that is a step in the right direction toward reversing that betrayal. It provides unequivocal protections for NASA's workforce, begins the process of restoring health to NASA's beleaguered Science programs, and also properly supports NASA's efforts to design and develop the next generation of manned spacecraft. IFPTE praises them for this and looks forward to swift passage of HR 3093.

We are however perplexed by the President's veto threat because, if anything, this modest, fiscally conservative bill does not go far enough when it comes to adequately funding NASA's Aeronautics and Technology programs as well. We at IFPTE remain hopeful that during the Conference Committee the appropriators will see to it that the Aeronautics funding will mirror what was previously passed in the House.

IFPTE also supports Senator Mikulski's efforts to provide an additional "emergency" \$1 billion dollars for NASA to pay back those programs previously cut to cover return-to-flight after the Columbia disaster when, despite the crisis, no such funds were forthcoming. These funds are critical for rebuilding long-term Research & Development programs seriously harmed by the transfer of their funds to cover unfunded short-term manned spaceflight milestones. While we strongly support this amendment, IFPTE believes that ultimately these funds should not be provided as a blank check to the Administration and should come along with explicit congressional direction to cover the broad portion of NASA's portfolio of missions, particularly those that have suffered the most from the previous failure to properly fund return-to-flight and the Vision for Space Exploration.

IFPTE has fully endorsed the higher funding levels provided in the House passed bill. We are now urging the Senate to pass their version of this legislation with the optimistic expectation that the conference will generate an even better final bill that adopts the House's prudent account structure and funding levels for the Aeronautics mission.

In closing, IFPTE asks that you vote in support of the Mikulski amendment to add a much needed boost to NASA's funding, as well as support the underlying bill. Should you have any questions I, or IFPTE Legislative Director Matt Biggs, can be reached at (301) 565-9016.

Sincerely,



Gregory J. Junemann,
President