

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4309

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9TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER,
CONGRESSIONAL
MISSING AND EXPLOITED
CHILDREN'S CAUCUS

December 9, 2003

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20502

Dear President Bush:

It is my understanding that you will soon make an announcement about the future of our national space policy. While I have already shared this information with Vice President Cheney, let me take this opportunity to offer my views on this topic with you.

America's human space flight program is adrift, with no clear vision or commitment to any goals after the completion of the International Space Station. I recently reintroduced the *Space Exploration Act* (H.R. 3057), legislation that I offered last year, to provide a vision and a concrete set of goals for the nation's human space flight program after the International Space Station. This legislation sets forth specific incremental goals that are challenging, exciting and that build capabilities and infrastructure needed for an ultimate human mission to Mars.

I believe we must establish a phased series of goals over the next 20 years including human visits to the Earth-Sun libration points and Earth-orbit crossing asteroids, deployment of a human-tended research and habitation facility on the Moon, and human expeditions to the surface and moons of Mars. However in the meantime, since the goals are sequenced in terms of increasing difficulty and complexity, achieving the earlier goals will also provide the capabilities needed for humans to explore other fascinating parts of the inner solar system while supporting the nation's scientific objectives.

The bill establishes an implementation framework that will allow the best, most innovative mission concepts to compete. It is an approach similar to that of the highly successful and innovative Discovery program in NASA's space science enterprise. In addition, the implementation approach contains tough requirements for periodic independent cost and program reviews to ensure that the exploration initiative is carried out in as cost-efficient and effective a manner as possible.

The real obstacle we face in overcoming the drift in the nation's human space flight program is not technological and it's not financial — it's the lack of commitment to get started. We don't need another national commission to come up with goals for human space flight beyond low Earth orbit. What we need is a national commitment to carry out any one of the many worthy goals that have been articulated to date.

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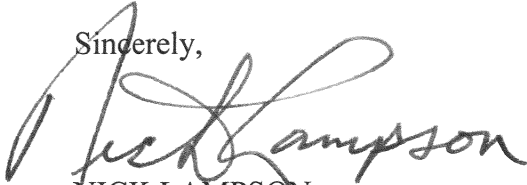
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Once America gets started on achieving the first of the human spaceflight goals listed in the bill, we have gotten over the highest hurdle to success in the entire initiative. We will once again be moving outward beyond low Earth orbit. And in the process, we will revitalize our space program, energize our industrial and academic sectors, create new opportunities for international cooperation, and inspire our young people. I hope you will join me in support of this legislation.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you personally. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nick Lampson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "N" and "L".

NICK LAMPSON
Member of Congress

NVL/dl