

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Office of the Administrator
Washington, DC 20546-0001



September 1, 2006

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Chair
Subcommittee on Science and Space
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chair:

Thank you for your letter signed jointly with Chairman Shelby, Senator Nelson, and Senator Mikulski expressing your sustained commitment to NASA and the International Space Station (ISS) Program. NASA looks forward to resuming assembly of the ISS with the upcoming flight of Atlantis, STS-115. This flight marks the beginning of a challenging series of missions designed to complete the construction of the ISS, enabling us to more fully utilize this unique science platform and to honor our international commitments. I also recognize your concerns regarding some pre-decisional budget trade studies conducted by the ISS Program Office. Let me assure you that you have my commitment to carry out Congressional direction within the resources provided. If I did not believe that NASA would be able to carry out such direction within the resources provided, I would keep you fully apprised.

As noted in your letter, the ISS Program Office was considering contingency plans in response to potential reductions to the program's FY 2007 budget. As you are aware, the program is operating within a very constrained budget environment, including having reduced reserves, and the ISS Program Office was simply conducting "what if" budget trade analyses. These studies were primarily looking at options for reducing infrastructure associated with supporting the current level of science on ISS, given up-mass and crew time limitations, in order to maximize the amount of science produced for the dollars invested. These assessments are intended to prepare for potential budget reductions, which the Agency hopes it will not ultimately confront.

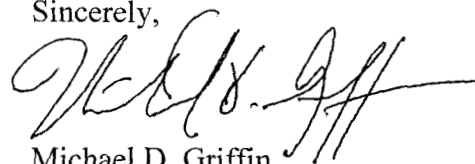
In response to the 2005 NASA Authorization Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-155), the Agency has met the requirement that 15 percent of the ISS research budget be allocated to non-exploration-related research beginning in FY 2006. In fact, several non-exploration experiments were flown to ISS on the most recent STS-121 flight. Your strong support for the President's FY 2007 NASA budget is critical to maintaining the Agency's ability to meet the goals of the Act and the Vision for Space Exploration. In addition, I also ask that you favorably consider NASA's request for transfer authority to pay back the Space Shuttle and ISS programs for funds used for immediate Hurricane Katrina response and recovery

activities at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi and the Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans, Louisiana. This flexibility will greatly help the ISS program's ability to manage the complex missions before them.

All of the remaining Space Shuttle and ISS missions are challenging and not without risk but they are worth doing for the future of space exploration. With STS-115, the Space Shuttle Atlantis will deliver a second set of solar arrays, which will double the Space Station's power output in anticipation of additional modules and research capabilities. The ISS has forged a tried and tested partnership among the space-faring Nations of Canada, Europe, Japan, Russia, and the United States. This partnership has endured tremendous hardships and stands by itself as a monumental international accomplishment. We can learn from this experience and expand on its positive aspects as we move forward in the exploration of the Moon and Mars.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. D. Griffin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael D. Griffin
Administrator