

An Open Letter to President Elect Obama – Ideas for a Space Legacy

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First of all, congratulations on a brilliantly run campaign. We add our hopes to that of our fellow citizens that this same degree of enthusiasm, optimism, organization, planning, intellect, and civility can be infused top down into all of Washington, D.C.

We have also been impressed with the thoroughness of your transition team's efforts in relation to reviewing NASA and its goals and challenges. It will indeed be a daunting task to maintain our country's lead in space on a \$20 billion budget and we offer no advice on the many complicated budgetary trades between completing the International Space Station and perhaps extending its life, accelerating development of the Ares and Orion programs to lessen any gap in our independent access to space or alternatively extending the Shuttle fleet's life. There are enough experts of differing opinions and no shortage of interested parties to make these decisions quite difficult. Good luck.

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What we really want to address is your legacy in space, because your legacy will be our legacy too. It is of course highly unlikely (though certainly not technically beyond our means) that any country will send people to the Moon, and certainly not onto the surface of Mars, within the next eight years. So, all audacious hope aside, that is unlikely to be your legacy. But like JFK, a clearly stated goal to boldly move forward on one or both can be your legacy and we would strongly suggest it should be. Do we really want to explain to our children and grandchildren in 2020 or 2025 how we landed on the Moon in 1969, but somehow lost the ultimate space race to China, India, Russia, Europe or all of the above? At the very least, let's find some partners and go back together.

As for the difficult decisions mentioned above, in 25, 50 or 100 years the world will little note whether the International Space Station was operated a few more years or not. What the world will remember is what wonderful new drugs or materials were first created there. So far the track record of investment and achievement is underwhelming. In the future, the world will not care so much as to whether re used Ares, Soyuz or the Shuttle to get into space during your Administration. They are all just upgrades of varying degrees of German rocket technology from WWII. The



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world will, however, be impressed if during your Administration new reusable launch vehicle technologies and systems are finally developed that allow us to gain the order of magnitude reduction in cost per kilogram we so desperately need. The world will remember if space tourism becomes a reality or if any country can add its citizens to the ranks of astronauts. Please consider how you might smartly invest in these new technologies and how access to space can be expanded for all. Looking back from the future, we suspect the world will also want to say that during your Administration we finally took Earth monitoring seriously and put in place new satellite constellations to measure, predict and better understand our global climate. We should really not be guessing when and where hurricanes will form and what direction they will head. That is so 20th century.

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Your Administration could also mark a renaissance of sort in mankind's quest to explore and use space. To date, other than for some notable commercial applications from Earth orbit, space has been almost exclusively the domain of governments. With recent and continuing advancements in technology that no longer has to be the case. The world is full of space enthusiasts and entrepreneurs, as we are sure you have discovered, and many are quite willing and able to risk their lives and their own capital. But operating in space is expensive and what they need are government incentives to attract additional capital. This has been talked about for years, but nothing major has ever happened. What we have gotten are X prizes of \$10 or \$20 million to accomplish things costing 10x to 100x more money. What we need are XXX Prizes, meaning amounts large enough to spur the private sector forward with realistic hopes of just rewards for accomplishing tasks the government would otherwise spend considerably more to achieve.

Lastly, as you contemplate a potential trillion dollar stimulus package, please keep in mind that we need more than just bridges and roads and the temporary construction jobs they entail. In fact, we would argue the jobs we really want to create for our country's long term competitive advantage are jobs in science and technology. We know you understand as your green technology, alternative energy and terrestrial broadband initiatives are exactly along these lines. What we humbly suggest is that a significantly increased investment in space also be considered. We need to do more than just maintain the "high ground" of space for our military and intelligence communities. We need to recommit ourselves to



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aggressively lead the world in exploring and using space for commercial, scientific and peaceful purposes for the benefit of all mankind. To achieve these gains we will of course need more home grown scientists and engineers. Sadly, we are falling woefully behind our important competitors in this regard. You, as President, can use your bully pulpit to make science and math cool and important to our youth and there is no better stimulus for that than Space, the Final Frontier.

Very respectfully,

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