

**Statement by Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
for Submission to Augustine Review Panel
Wednesday, June 17, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Human Space Flight Review Panel, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement in this hearing to underscore some of the recent congressional authorization activity that is relevant to your review of US Human Space Flight programs.

You have a huge challenge and a critical responsibility, and I appreciate your willingness to devote the time necessary to conduct this review.

The first point that should be clear from both the 2005 and 2008 NASA Authorization Acts is that they reflect a broad, bi-partisan, bicameral level of support for the US Human spaceflight programs. More specifically, both bills express support for the goal of returning to the Moon to conduct the kind of sustained human exploration that was not possible in the Apollo program.

They express support for completing the International Space Station and making the maximum possible use of its laboratory facilities for microgravity research across a broad range of science disciplines. The 2005 Act designated the space station as a National Laboratory, and began its evolution to a facility that not only can meet NASA's research needs, but those of other government agencies, educational consortia, and private research and development concerns.

Both bills conveyed the concern of the Congress regarding the pending gap in US human spaceflight capability—a gap that would begin voluntarily with the end of space shuttle operations—mandated not by technical, engineering, structural or systemic issues, but by a zero-sum budget plan that would require transferring the funds being spent on the shuttle to the efforts to develop its replacement vehicles, the Ares launch vehicles and the Orion Crew Exploration Vehicle.

Both bills also demonstrated a serious degree of concern for the difficult transition from one launch system to the next, and the potential impacts to the highly—and in many cases uniquely—qualified and dedicated people across the country who support our nation's human spaceflight programs, whether they be civil servants, contractors, vendors or suppliers.

The potential loss of many of those skilled resources represents a severe disturbance within the “Gathering Storm” that the Chairman so clearly outlined in his most recent contribution to the US policy arena in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics excellence and competitiveness. It has long term implications, not only in places like Houston and the Johnson Space Center in my part of the country, but across a

broad spectrum of the country's industrial capabilities and to the vitality of its most skilled workforce.

We must also not forget that America's leadership in space plays an important role in our nation's national security. We have already seen the preeminent role that space based technology plays in modern warfare and intelligence gathering. Maintaining our efforts in human space flight is an essential part of sustaining the nation's overall space leadership.

There is not adequate time today to give you more than this brief overview of the primary intentions behind the actions and legislation of our Subcommittee and the Congress that I believe you need to be aware of and factor into your deliberations. My Committee staff has prepared a collection of the relevant language, supporting and related information from NASA, the General Accountability Office and the Congressional Budget Office, and a broader description of the issues and concerns we have addressed and continue to address as we draft a 2009 Authorization bill, which we will provide to you. My staff will be available to provide any further detailed information you feel is needed.

Finally, I want to stress my belief that you must be able to consider any and all possible options and alternatives to ensure the continuation and future success of the US human spaceflight programs. I believe it is essential for your review to be unconstrained by any binding consideration, whether budgetary or programmatic. We in the Congress and, I believe, the Administration, must be given a clear picture of what is attainable and what resources would be required. We will then be in a position to make the judgments necessary to achieve the best possible and most affordable result for the American taxpayer.

Again, I want to thank you for your commitment to this enormous task, and I look forward to seeing the result of your efforts. I commend you for joining with the Administration and my colleagues in the Congress to derive the best possible path forward to sustain an essential national asset and preserve our country's leadership in space.