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Mr. Norman R. Augustine  
Chairman  
U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee  
NASA Headquarters  
300 E Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee,

I want to thank you for visiting Huntsville and Decatur and for providing the opportunity for those directly involved with space, as well as the general public, to interact with the Committee.

The objectives that you are undertaking are both a challenge and an opportunity. You have a huge challenge before you and a critical responsibility in determining the options and direction of our nation's human space flight program. I appreciate your willingness to devote the time necessary to conduct this review.

North Alabama, and specifically the Marshall Space Flight Center, has been at the forefront of human space flight since the beginning of our nation's space program. Today we meet in the shadow of the great achievements the people at NASA have accomplished. I hope that the enthusiasm that surrounds this area, with its ties to human space flight, has been evident to the Committee.

We have just celebrated the 40th anniversary of humans landing on the Moon for the first time. It has been a time to reflect on what our nation is capable of when leadership, motivation, and perseverance come together for a goal that is defined and supported. Now we must move on and move forward, and this Committee will provide options that will define the direction manned space flight will take in space for decades to come.

There is a robust space economy in Alabama and across this country, with companies that can do everything from building rockets that will go to the far reaches of the universe, to developing nano-particles for stronger materials that withstand the rigors of space. No matter what has been needed, American ingenuity, combined with the capability and direction from NASA, has brought an understanding of the universe that only a few generations ago would have thought impossible to know. This would never have happened without NASA leading the way.

NASA's manned space program, its astronauts, and its accomplishments, are the inspiration that leads future generations to become our innovators, engineers, and scientists. The

impact of human space flight reaches far beyond aerospace activities. It attracts people to scientific careers and the development of technologies that improve our lives in many ways.

The inspiration provided by the human space flight program launched an entire generation that, while aspiring to be like the astronauts that would go to space, would become the scientists and engineers that make our country the leader in science, technology, and innovation it is today. For us to maintain such leadership, the children of today need those same opportunities, dreams, and excitement to maintain our country's place as a leader in aerospace, as well as in other scientific disciplines like physics, biology, and chemistry.

I support manned space flight and see that it is as relevant today as it was over 40 years ago. The benefits to our nation go far beyond NASA, yet without clear direction and purpose, NASA will achieve less as it fights internal battles over what direction it should take. As the Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Activities and as a Senator from the state that is home to the NASA center that focuses on delivering humans to space, the funding and direction of the nation's space program is of great importance to me. History shows that when the nation has provided the necessary resources and called upon the people of Alabama to deliver humans to space, they have delivered.

I wish to thank you, and the rest of the members of the Committee, for their commitment to human space flight, and to our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Shelby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Richard Shelby