

Members of the Committee:

The Brevard Workforce Development Board has been funded by the State of Florida and multiple federal agencies to work with NASA on post-Shuttle workforce issues. As part of this effort, we have also sponsored and participated on a variety of panels and boards focused on federal space policy alternatives. We anticipate that your committee will conduct hearings where our ideas and concerns may be heard, but in the meantime we appreciate the opportunity to electronically share this information with your committee:

Workforce

- Although workforce issues are not explicitly within your committee's charter, we believe the skilled launch industry workers at Kennedy Space Center (KSC) represent a critical component of whatever system is developed to replace the Shuttle.
- Among all the NASA centers, KSC will experience the largest loss of space industry workers. This workforce has acquired skills in human spaceflight that cannot easily be duplicated, and which would be lost with a multi-year gap in spaceflight operations. We share NASA's concern that strategically skilled workers will migrate to other careers and other communities after the Space Shuttle is retired.

Infrastructure

- Taxpayers have invested tens of billions of dollars to develop the active-use infrastructure that has turned KSC and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station into the world's most capable spaceport. As with the workforce that operates and maintains this infrastructure, use of these taxpayer-developed assets should be maximized as a matter of public policy.

Heavy Lift

- Most experts believe that U.S. human spaceflight missions beyond Low Earth Orbit will require a heavy-lift launch vehicle that matches or improves upon the capability we now have with the Space Shuttle. NASA's current plan defers the launching of heavy-lift (Ares-5) vehicles until ~2019. Those post-Shuttle launch system alternatives that preserve or accelerate our heavy-lift capability would expand our options for exploration (and other) missions, while optimizing our current infrastructure and workforce resources.

International Space Station

- Florida has invested much to support the International Space Station (ISS), including a state-of-the-art Space Life Sciences (SLS) Lab at KSC. This facility was completed just before NASA decided to halt much of the research aboard ISS and instead focus on the Constellation Moon/Mars plan. The SLS Lab's capabilities are now underutilized and its future continues to be an issue of concern between with KSC and the State of Florida. Now that the ISS is designated as a "National Laboratory" there is much hope that the SLS Lab can again be put to its intended use. Of course, Florida's economic interests should not guide the committee's decisions, but it should be useful to know that the state views this as a strategic opportunity and is spending state dollars to leverage NASA's investments.
- NASA should help to develop, and then procure, near-term commercial human transport services for the ISS. This would develop new capabilities for the U.S. commercial launch industry while eliminating our reliance on foreign governments.