

Dear committee,

President Bush's VSE was indeed bold – it asked for an effort that spans multiple administrations, and thus – politically brave. However, it lacks two interconnected properties:

1. The VSE told NASA to go to the Moon and Mars – but didn't tell WHY to go there.
2. The time span covered by the VSE is still "short" in the sense that it is a single-generation effort.

The "beyond LEO" subcommittee started to answer these questions – but still didn't quite spell out the explicit word: the \*reason\* we go out to space is – on the long term – COLONIALIZATION. This is a long-term goal, and the VSE is just a step (albeit a big one) in this long road.

Recognizing this has many immediate applications. For e.g.:

- We go to the Moon and Mars to learn to live elsewhere. The primary mission of the astronauts will be technology development to alleviate (and ultimately liberate) the need for Earth-based support.

- Although I am an astrophysicist by occupation, the Human Space Flight program as a whole should NOT be built to do science, even astrophysics, but to do exploration – and science should be viewed as an opportunity, not a goal. Thus, for e.g., building a spaceship

\*specifically\* to be able to go to Lagrange points - is futile. It will be nice if it's possible, but it is NOT an architecture-setting goal.

In my day-to-day life I look for transiting extrasolar planets. Early on the exoplanet business people weren't ready to openly say that the long-term goal is to find exo-life, but today it is so accepted that it is written in serious science papers – although no one knows (yet) to build the instrument that can do that. Still – it is the LONG TERM goal. I think the committee should do (or recommend) the same: COLONIALIZATION is the multi-generation goal of human space flight.

My you succeed in your difficult task,

Aviv Ofir.

P.S.

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