

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 22, 2005

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, and Science
United States Capitol, S146-A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, and Science
Hart Senate Office Building, 123
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski,

As you prepare to mark up the FY 2006 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill, we urge you to appropriate \$29.550 million for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program (Space Grant).

As you know, Space Grant was first established under Title II of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-147). Today, a network of 52 state-wide consortia, with relatively little federal funding, ranging, at this point, from \$215,000-\$475,000 per consortium per year, is delivering an impressive and important array of programs designed to attract young people to space science and engineering careers and to help prepare for entry into scientific and high technology jobs in this area.

The FY2000 NASA Reauthorization Act authorized the Space Grant Program at \$28 million in FY 2001 and FY 2002. Thanks to your help, Space Grant is currently funded at \$28.2 million for FY 2005. Unfortunately, the President's FY 2006 budget request is again at \$19.1 million. We are asking for your help to appropriate \$29.550 million to the Space Grant Program in FY 2006. This will build upon the current \$28.2 million program and continue efforts including workforce development initiatives to attract and retain a diverse set of students in NASA-related fields of study and jobs.

NASA's FY 2006 budget states that the Higher Education projects are intended to serve as a major link in the student pipeline used to address NASA's Human Capital Strategies and the President's Management Agenda by helping to "... build, sustain and effectively deploy the skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and high performing workforce needed to meet the current and emerging needs of government and its citizens." It further states that all higher education projects will continue to focus on retaining students in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, (STEM) disciplines through their completion of undergraduate or graduate degrees and entry into the scientific and technical workforce. We are not training enough Americans in STEM for the high technology requirements of tomorrow.

One answer to this issue – a proven one—is the Space Grant Program. Space Grant provides scholarships and fellowships to students in every state and most Congressional districts. It provides practical educational and research experiences for students in space, science and related fields.

Workshops and after-school programs are conducted to assist faculty and teachers and to attract and retain students in relevant STEM career tracks. It is a program that is working throughout the nation. Space Grant provides important support for the nation's science and aerospace effort by funding education, workforce development, research and public service projects through a national network of over 800 affiliates which include universities, colleges, federal R&D centers and business partners, located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

Again, we urge you to appropriate \$29.550 million in FY 2006 for Space Grant.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Chuck Hesel

Max Baucus

Mark Dayton

Jay Rockefeller

George Allen

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Rebbie Steneow

Pat Kennedy

Steve Johnson

Joe Biden

John Edwards

Carl Levin

Frent Lott

Blanche L. Lincoln

Byron L. Eng

Hunt Lennard