

NSGA

National Space Grant Alliance

January 25, 2007

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
S-146A The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
H-310 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
2442 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman/Ranking Member:

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed year-long Continuing Resolution for FY 2007 and its impact on the National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program (Space Grant).

As you know, Space Grant received an appropriation of \$32 million in FY 2006 and the President's budget request for FY 2007 was \$28.76 million. The House SSJC FY 2007 Appropriations Bill included the President's budget request and the following language: "...The Committee also encourages NASA to allocate funding above the request for the Space Grant..."

This funding is critical to enabling Space Grant to provide scholarships and fellowships to students in every state and most Congressional districts. These scholarships, fellowships, and other forms of direct student support such as summer internships at NASA Centers (funded through Space Grant) and university laboratories, are an important part of the pipeline of scientists and engineers for NASA and related employment. This funding is also critical to retaining the people who comprise this national education and outreach network.

Obviously, we in the Space Grant program are concerned about the delay in completing the FY 2007 appropriations process. The Maryland and Alabama Space Grant programs have agreements with NASA that expire on March 1, 2007. West Virginia's agreement expires on March 15, 2007 and New Jersey's on May 1. Most states are in the March timeframe. Consequently, we need from Congress an indication that Space Grant is to be continued throughout FY 2007 and we need for funding to be provided by NASA in a timely manner so that the Space Grant programs in the individual states can make commitments to students for the summer and coming academic year.

Following is a brief synopsis of Space Grant efforts in your four states. Hopefully, this will provide an indication of the impact of delayed or reduced funding in FY 2007.

Maryland has awarded \$119,000 for scholarships and fellowships in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics this year. Roughly 95% of the scholarships and fellowships are currently awarded to undergraduates, while the remaining 5% goes to graduate students.

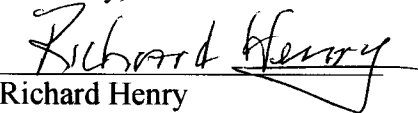
Alabama awards about \$300,000 in Space Grant Fellowships and Scholarships each year. This funding has supported over 400 undergraduate scholarships and 120 graduate fellowships over the past 10 years, for a total of almost \$3 million. These students attend Alabama's 7 research universities and come from every Congressional district in the state. After a rigorous academic competition at each campus in March of each year awardees are selected to begin their awards in August. This requires commitment of funds at each campus in April or May. Otherwise, the best students apply for other awards than Space Grant, and we lose students to other efforts, defeating our goal of attracting the best students into aerospace careers.

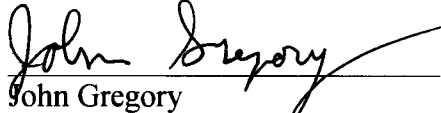
In the academic year 2006-2007, the NASA West Virginia Space Grant Consortium made various NASA fellowships and research opportunities to 166 undergraduate students and 18 graduate students at its eleven member institutions. The total amount allocated to these fellowships and research opportunities was \$616, 675.

For the last several years, New Jersey Space Grant has awarded \$85,000 to \$110,000 in student scholarships and fellowships each year.

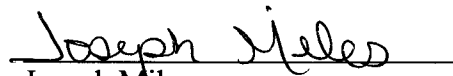
As you can see this funding is critical to providing scholarships and fellowships to students in STEM related areas and securing a trained workforce for the future. Consequently, we ask that, as you work on the FY 2007 funding vehicle, you ensure that Space Grant continues at the budget level of \$28.76 million and that funds are released by NASA to the states promptly so that commitments to student financial support for the summer and fall can be made.

Sincerely,


Richard Henry
Maryland Space Grant Director


John Gregory
Alabama Space Grant Director


Majid Jaraiedi
West Virginia Space Grant Director


Joseph Miles
New Jersey Space Grant Director