

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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Dear Representative,

As President of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), NASA's largest union, I would like to thank House Science and Technology Committee (HSTC) Chairmen Bart Gordon, Aeronautics Subcommittee Chairman Mark Udall, and Ranking Members Ralph Hall and Tom Feeney, for putting forth a bipartisan, one year NASA Re-Authorization bill (HR 6063) for full House consideration today or tomorrow. The bill recommends that NASA be funded approximately \$1.8 billion above President Bush's proposed Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) budget, with an additional \$1 billion to address the gap in U.S. manned access to space.

The bipartisan recognition that NASA requires significantly greater funding to succeed in all of its assigned missions sends a powerful message to the next Administration. We hope that the loud and specific call for increases in funding for NASA's Science, Aeronautics, and Technology Development programs, in order to begin the process of restoring them to full health, will be heeded by Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriators. **For these reasons and those stated below, IFPTE recommends passage of H.R. 6063.**

IFPTE applauds Representatives Kucinich and Danny Davis for working with the HSTC in support of a series of progressive workforce provisions aimed at reversing years of poor workforce planning within a hostile anti-civil service management culture. The layoff moratorium included in this legislation is essential for improving employee morale, thus allowing NASA's workforce to focus on technical productivity and on program continuity, not on job security. The 10% cap on the use of term positions is critical for reinforcing employee technical independence and for attracting the best and brightest young scientists and engineers into meaningful and sustained careers at NASA, thus allowing NASA's workforce to focus on mission integrity and safety, not on job security. While IFPTE was hopeful that all four of the Kucinich-Davis provisions could be included, and that their initial term-cap language could have been preserved in its original form, the union remains committed to working with Authorizers on these important matters as the bill moves forward, or in next year's bill.

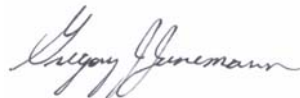
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Although IFPTE supports the bill and the resources called for in H.R. 6063, we continue to have reservations with some of the provisions. We are particularly concerned that adding three additional Shuttle flights to the official manifest may move Shuttle Operations past the Columbia Accident Investigation Board's (CAIB) firm deadline of retirement by the end of 2010. In addition to the daunting safety considerations, should the Shuttle timeline slip past this deadline, many billions of dollars of additional costs will be required, dollars that are not contemplated in H.R. 6063 and not likely to be appropriated. The hard mandate for these Shuttle flights should be tempered by this reality, making them contingent upon feasible completion before the end of 2010 or upon specific appropriations. The respectful transition of NASA Shuttle workforce into new and vital aerospace efforts is a critical issue, but it will not be achieved by unfunded mandates. We are also concerned by the outsourcing mandates that will force NASA to perform much of its R&D out-of-house as opposed to allowing NASA to make these critical decisions based on merit, best practices, specific circumstances, and -- most importantly -- on the long-term health of NASA and its missions. Any such mandates, which appear to be extensions of the harmful legacy of the Administration's anti-government ideology, should be tempered by these considerations, making all outsourcing of R&D discretionary, merit-based, and contingent on being in the best interest of the Agency and the taxpayer. IFPTE looks toward resolving these concerns as the bill moves to the Senate and in Conference.

In all, IFPTE is pleased with the bipartisan support for NASA and its workforce evidenced in H.R. 6063. Such support is in the best interest of the nation, not only because NASA is critical for maintaining U.S. leadership in scientific research, civilian aviation, and space exploration but also because NASA contributes to America's economic competitiveness and inspires the next generation of bright young Americans to become scientists and engineers. IFPTE therefore respectfully asks that you vote for H.R. 6063.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, I, or IFPTE Legislative Director Matt Biggs can be reached at (202) 239-4880.

Sincerely,



Gregory J. Junemann,
President