

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator:

In 2004, our nation began a new chapter in the exploration of space -- one that will return us to the Moon and then send humans to Mars. This destination focused program sets goals that are worthy of our nation's heritage of exploration and the risks taken by our astronauts.

However, the program is now under attack. The United States House of Representatives has placed language in the FY08 budget that would prevent NASA from spending any money on projects that are exclusively focused on human missions to Mars. **This language must be removed from the budget.** If this text is allowed to remain in the budget, it could degrade our future human exploration plans into a Moon-only dead-end exercise.

Why is it important that we explore Mars? From a scientific standpoint, Mars is the key goal for our human exploration program, because it once had a warm-wet environment suitable for the development of life. This fact makes Mars the Rosetta-Stone for determining the validity of the theory that life evolves from chemistry wherever the right physical conditions exist. By exploring Mars we will find out the truth about the prevalence and potential diversity of life in the universe – a question that has puzzled thinking men and women for millennia. Of the worlds outside our own, Mars also uniquely holds the natural resources necessary to human life and civilization. Thus for the sake of both science and the future, we cannot give up Mars as our central goal. While it has been said that we don't have the technology to reach for Mars now, if the House language blocking Mars technology research is allowed to remain in place, we never will.

The American people want and deserve a space program that achieves great things. They will not get it if the crippling House language remains in place. Instead we will continue to waste billions repeating accomplishments of decades past, while shirking the challenges that would bring us new knowledge, inspire millions of young people to learn science, and truly open a new frontier for the human future.

Thankfully, the current United States Senate version of the budget does not contain the anti-Mars language, but it is entirely possible that it will end up in the final budget if members Senate do not actively oppose it. We hope that you will act forcefully to prevent this program-crippling clause from becoming a part of the final FY08 budget.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,