

September 13, 2013

The Honorable Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Administrator Bolden:

We are writing to express support for NASA's ongoing efforts to grant partner access to its facilities and equipment not fully utilized by NASA's current missions. These efforts are consistent with Congressional direction (e.g., P.L. 110-422 and 111-267), help reduce government operations and maintenance costs, and support the agency's overall mission, national space policy objectives, and national and regional economic development. We strongly encourage NASA to continue the unbiased, transparent, and competitive implementation of these efforts.

Given the importance of this issue in the face of constrained resources, we have closely monitored NASA's process for leasing these assets. Underutilized infrastructure is an agency-wide challenge recognized by Congress, the U.S. Government Accountability Office, and the NASA Office of the Inspector General. Congress has granted, expanded, and affirmed NASA's leasing authorities necessary to address these challenges, such as providing and expanding enhanced use lease authority in 2003 (P.L. 108-7), 2008 (P.L. 110-161), and 2011 (P.L. 112-55). In advance of the Space Shuttle retirement, the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-267) further directed the Agency "to evolve toward the most efficient retention, sizing, and distribution of facilities, laboratories, test capabilities, and other infrastructure consistent with NASA's missions and mandates."

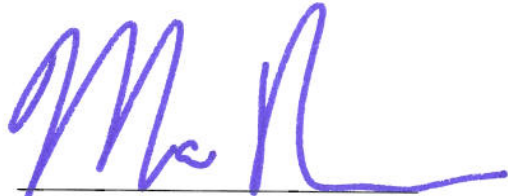
We therefore applaud the agency's work to identify other users for facilities, including the Vehicle Assembly Building, the Orbiter Processing Facilities, Launch Pads 39A and B, the Shuttle Landing Facility, and many others. As you know, NASA commenced this work early in 2010 with a process that has evolved to fairly select between a range of interested parties. The steps taken have been consistent with legislative mandates to encourage the commercial use of space (51 U.S.C. 20112) and to promote the acquisition of excess launch facilities (51 U.S.C. 50913).

We support NASA's efforts to make the best use of its valuable infrastructure, as driven by the agency's current and future mission needs. NASA should apply its extensive expertise in this area and not yield to outside influence when determining what factors to consider in choosing partners to ensure that its selection process yields the best outcome for our nation's space program. We look forward to timely decisions to that end.

Sincerely,



Senator Bill Nelson



Senator Marco Rubio