

Elaine J. Camhi

Editor-in-Chief

Patricia Jefferson

Associate Editor

Greg Wilson

Production Editor

Jerry Grey, *Editor-at-Large*

Christine Williams, *Editor AIAA Bulletin*

Correspondents

Robert F. Dorr, *Washington*

Philip Butterworth-Hayes, *Europe*

Michael Westlake, *Hong Kong*

Contributing Writers

Richard Aboulafla, **James W. Canan**,

Marco Cáceres, **Craig Covault**, **Philip**

Finnegan, **Ed Flinn**, **Tom Jones**, **David**

Rockwell, **Frank Sietzen**, **J.R. Wilson**

Fitzgerald Art & Design

Art Direction and Design

Craig Byl, *Manufacturing and Distribution*

Mark Lewis, *President*

Robert S. Dickman, *Publisher*

STEERING COMMITTEE

Michael B. Bragg, *University of Illinois;*

Philip Hattis, *Draper Laboratory;* **Mark S.**

Maurice, *AFOSR;* **Laura McGill**, *Raytheon;*

Merri Sanchez, *National Aeronautics and*

Space Administration; **Mary Snitch**, *Lock-*

heed Martin; **David W. Thompson**, *Orbital*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Ned Allen, *Lockheed Martin Aeronautics;*

Jean-Michel Contant, *EADS;* **Eugene**

Covert, *Massachusetts Institute of Technol-*

ogy; **L.S. "Skip" Fletcher**, *Texas A&M Uni-*

versity; **Michael Francis**, *United Technologies;*

Christian Mari, *Teuchos;* **Cam Martin**,

NASA Dryden; **Don Richardson**, *Donrich*

Research; **Douglas Yazell**, *Honeywell*

ADVERTISING

National Display and Classified:

Robert Silverstein, 240.498.9674

rsilverstein@AdSalesExperts.net

West Coast Display: **Greg Cruse**,

949.361.1870 / *gcruse@AdSalesExperts.net*

Send materials to **Craig Byl**, AIAA, 1801

Alexander Bell Drive, Suite 500, Reston, VA

20191-4344. Changes of address should be

sent to Customer Service at the same address,

by e-mail at *custserv@aiaa.org*, or by fax at

703.264.7606.

Send Letters to the Editor to **Elaine Camhi**

at the same address or *elaine@aiaa.org*

September 2010, Vol. 48, No. 8



American Institute of
Aeronautics and Astronautics

Editorial

Dollars and sense

On July 15, shortly before the congressional summer recess began, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation unanimously approved a compromise NASA authorization bill challenging the Obama administration's budget proposal. Shortly thereafter, the House Committee on Science and Technology offered up its own proposal, which recommends the same amount of money, approximately \$19 billion—a \$1-billion increase over last year's budget—but distributed in quite a different fashion.

This month, when the Congress reconvenes, members from both chambers will work to reconcile the two widely divergent proposals in an effort to provide a path to the future of human spaceflight, both for NASA and for commercial enterprises that are actively involved in developing future space transportation systems.

One of the key differences between the proposals from the two chambers deals with the portion of NASA funding that should be allocated to those commercial human spaceflight efforts, a key element of the Obama budget request. How many of the companies now invested in developing human space transportation vehicles will be able, or willing, to stay in the business if that funding is severely cut back remains an issue.

Another key difference concerns the future of the Constellation program, and its cancellation, favored by the White House, or its continuation (albeit in altered form), which is the House position.

Unfortunately, the agreements reached may be driven more by regional or political concerns than technical ones. There is clearly more than jobs at stake in this debate; the future role of the United States in the human exploration of space may well be up for grabs. Questions concerning the viability or robustness of a particular decision may be trumped by concerns over the possible loss of local jobs, and technical hurdles are being met with economic responses.

In addition, neither the proposals from either chamber nor the administration's budget request incorporate the recommendations of the U.S. Human Space Flight Plans Committee. One of the key findings of the Augustine commission was that, regardless of which "path" to space the U.S. chose to follow, the NASA budget would need to be increased by at least \$3 billion annually in order to develop a sustainable human spaceflight capability and maintain the U.S. position as a leader in human space activities.

In addition, although all proposals favor the continuation of the international space station, U.S. access to the orbiting laboratory will be, in and for the foreseeable future, out of our hands.

No doubt he was correct when Rep. Bart Gordon said, of the House proposal, "We are facing tough economic times that demand tough choices." But those choices must be based on clear, reasoned understanding of the difficult challenges of maintaining a human presence in space and expanding our exploration of the universe.

Human space transportation activities are now or soon will be taking place all around the globe. In that regard, the "local" in politics should be the U.S.

Elaine Camhi
Editor-in-Chief