

Showdown Over Space Program



IAM President Tom Buffenbarger called for a strong U.S. manned space flight program at the IAM's "Save Our Space Program, Save Our Jobs" rally in Houston, TX.

rockets to the International Space Station (ISS).

"Just like we've given away our nation's manufacturing capability, we are about to surrender our leadership in space to Russia, China and India," said IAM President Tom Buffenbarger.

"The manned space program in the United States has been the pride of the nation and the envy of the world for more than 50 years. It has more than earned our continued support."

Bipartisan Support

Congress approved the Constellation program in 2005 to ensure America had a manned space program in development when the shuttle program ends. Though underfunded by the Bush administration, NASA has invested more than \$9 billion in Constellation's mission to get astronauts to the ISS, return astronauts to the

Hundreds of IAM and community members rally in Houston, TX, to support the U.S. manned space flight program.

moon and later to Mars.

The Constellation projects include the Ares I rocket and Orion space capsule to ferry astronauts to the ISS and the Ares V, a heavy-lift rocket, to launch equipment for trips to the moon and Mars. The Constellation program is key to preserving the skills and experience of the thousands of workers who have been the backbone of America's space program.

"Two years ago we were told we were going to keep America's manned space program going," said IAM Southern Territory General Vice President Robert Martinez, Jr., at the IAM's "Save Our Space Program" rally in Houston, TX. "This administration's decision to cancel Constellation clearly leads us in the wrong direction."

From John Glenn's historic orbit of the Earth to Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon, America's manned space flight program has been a potent symbol of the nation's manufacturing know-how and engineering innovation.

With the space shuttle program set for retirement in late 2010, America is about to abdicate its place as a leader in manned space flight. The Obama administration has proposed ending Constellation, the manned space flight program that was supposed to replace the shuttle, and pay the Russians \$56 million per seat for U.S. astronauts to hitchhike on their





Shuttle Atlantis lifts off for its last mission. Unless the shuttle program is extended, flights will end in November 2010 and will leave NASA without the capability to send astronauts into space for the first time in its history.

AP/World Wide Photo

The Obama administration shocked the NASA community this spring by proposing to scrap most of the Constellation program, turn over more of the responsibility for manned space flight to private industry and shift much of NASA's mission to developing new technology and deep space exploration. The proposal, outlined in Obama's 2011 budget request, puts thousands of IAM members' jobs at the Johnson Space Center in Texas, the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and other locations at risk.

Maintaining NASA's primary role in human space flight has considerable bipartisan support in Congress, and Obama's proposal has met some stiff resistance. The Machinists Union has been

In testimony before Congress, Neil Armstrong, left, the first person to walk on the moon, and Eugene Cernan, the last astronaut to walk on the moon, called the dismantling of U.S. manned space flight program "devastating."

leading the fight to save jobs by extending the shuttle program to 2012, preserving parts of the manned space program and fighting for programs to minimize job losses.

Jobs Lost

"We stand to lose almost 8,000 of the 14,000 people working on the space shuttle at the Kennedy Space Center," said IAM District Lodge 166 Directing Business Representative Johnny Walker. "When you add in the people at the Johnson Space Center, other NASA facilities and the jobs at more

than 3,000 contractors across the nation who supply the shuttle program, this is a national issue."

"If NASA and the Obama administration have their way, American astronauts will be hitchhiking up to the International Space Station," said Buffenbarger. "Our government is aiding and abetting the outsourcing of the best jobs in America to Russia, China, India, Brazil and everywhere else. It's time to let NASA, the White House and Congress know that we must preserve America's Space Program."



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