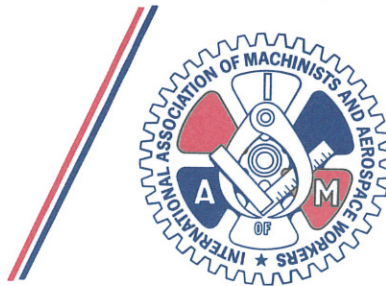


**International
Association of
Machinists and
Aerospace Workers**



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Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772-2687

Area Code 301
967-4500



OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT

April 29, 2014

Dear Representative,

I am writing to urge you to reject any attempt to reopen the Block Buy contract for the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program. United Launch Alliance (ULA), the current contractor, was created in 2006 because the U.S. Air Force EELV program could not sustain two independent companies with redundant infrastructure and employees. Since then, ULA has completed over eighty launches with a 100 percent mission success rate—the only U.S. launch provider to do so.

While some backers of SpaceX, which has received hundreds of millions of dollars in government subsidies, claim that a new competition is necessary to reduce costs. The reality is that, according to the Air Force, the Block Buy award to ULA will save \$4.4 billion over the life of the contract. Further, SpaceX is neither certified to perform the launches provided by ULA, nor capable of providing a launch vehicle that can execute all of the critical national security missions of the EELV program—only ULA has that capability.

ULA has been criticized for using Russian made engines on the Atlas V launch vehicle. While the IAM strongly prefers an American made engine for all of our launch vehicles, we should be clear that the dependence on the Russians for rocket engines for the Atlas V and to ferry our astronauts to the International Space Station is the direct result of U.S. under investment in NASA. Although ULA has enough engines to accomplish all of its missions for the next two years, recent actions by Russia should give added impetus for finding an U.S. supplier of engines for the Atlas V. In the meantime, not using the Russian made engines would only weaken our efforts in space and put Americans out of work.

As the largest union at NASA, IAM members have been an integral component of every launch going back to the original Mercury program. Our members are also employed in the EELV supply chain located in over twenty states across the U.S. For decades, our members' skills and dedication have provided the "right stuff" to successfully meet the challenges of our nation's space program. Ending the Block Buy EELV award to ULA would not only add unnecessary costs during a period of budget uncertainty, but would also weaken our national security and do damage to the suppliers and workers that have been the back bone of our space program. For these reasons, I urge you not to undermine the critical human and technical infrastructure that would be damaged with the reopening the EELV Block Buy award.

If you have any questions, please contact Legislative Director Hasan Solomon at (301) 967-4575.

Sincerely,

R. Thomas Buffenbarger
International President