

Citizens for Space Exploration – Washington, D.C. Trip May 15-18, 2006

Executive Summary Report

General Background: Citizens for Space Exploration (CSE) is comprised of a diverse group of small and large business representatives, students and teachers, and county/municipal officials and employees who support America's investment in space exploration.

2006 marked the 15th annual trip of CSE – formerly known as National Keep It Sold – to Washington, D.C. for meetings with Congress. CSE's bottom-line message was to advocate no less than full funding of NASA's FY07 budget request and support for the Vision for Space Exploration. CSE members also promoted a letter sponsored by Reps. Hall (R-TX), Feeney (R-FL) and Schiff (D-CA) urging the House Science, State, Justice and Commerce Appropriations Subcommittee to approve, at a minimum, full funding of NASA's FY07 budget.

More than 130 citizen taxpayers – including 32 students/educators – from 18 states met with 290 congressional offices to advocate on behalf of NASA and the Vision. Members and/or staff were provided with a standard briefing paper that reviewed the benefits of space exploration and the importance of full funding for NASA, as well as the CSE newsletter and a Coalition for Space Exploration Public Affairs team CD with background information concerning the Vision. Members and staff also participated in a congressional reception hosted by the CSE.

While in Washington, CSE members attended a partner appreciation breakfast sponsored by the Space Alliance Technology Outreach Program (SATOP) recognizing the efforts of NASA and its contractors to assist non-space small businesses with various technical challenges needed to make their products and/or services commercially successful.

Meeting Feedback: The information below provides a brief, top-level summary of major findings from CSE visits with House and Senate members/staff. The information is organized into six areas.

1. **Knowledge of the Vision:** Approximately 63% of the members/staff visited were knowledgeable – to some degree – about the Vision. [Note: Approximately 10% of visits were with the Representative or Senator, while 90% of CSE visits took place with staff. Therefore, judgments concerning knowledge levels more often reflected the awareness level of staff, rather than of the member.] The remainder demonstrated little or no working knowledge of the Vision and its primary elements.
2. **Knowledge of the Benefits of Space Exploration:** Approximately 60% demonstrated some level of knowledge or awareness of benefits derived from space exploration. [Note: Same caution applies as in #1 above in that

this finding frequently measured staff awareness, rather than member knowledge. Indeed, in some cases, new – and relatively uninformed – staff were working for members who are more experienced in space matters and better informed overall.] A reasonable percentage of the 60%, however, would still benefit from additional information concerning the value derived from space exploration and research.

3. **Major Concerns about the Vision and/or NASA's Budget:** The most common concerns expressed dealt with reductions in NASA science funding and the overall competition for limited budget resources across the federal government. Other significant issues of concern were the gap, reductions in NASA aeronautics research funding, and a lack of interest from constituents about the space program. Finally, some discontent was voiced about program cost overruns and NASA mismanagement.
4. **Concern about Challenges to U.S. Leadership (e.g. China):** Approximately 68% of those who discussed this issue voiced a concern about China and U.S. leadership. Most, however, did not express that concern in terms of a “space race” between China and America; instead, they commented with alarm about the commitment China is making to engineering education as compared to U.S. students. There was a general uneasiness about the implications of this development for U.S. leadership and its ability to compete in the future. [Note: The CSE briefing paper specifically raised this engineering education issue which may have prompted some of the interest and/or expressions of concern. Absent that prompt, a much smaller percentage of members and/or staff seemed overly concerned about China.]
5. **Major Topics of Interest:** Education (particularly in math and science) was the overwhelming hottest topic of interest to members/staff, along with issues dealing with technological competitiveness, technology development and technology transfer. [Note: The large number of students participating in the CSE trip may have prompted an orientation toward education as a major topic of member/staff interest.] Other key topics of interest were jobs, science research (e.g. life and earth sciences), commercial space, SATOP, spinoff benefits (e.g. medical, agricultural), national security applications, and alternative fuel research.
6. **Overall Support for NASA and the Vision:** In the judgment of the CSE teams, 73% were either very supportive or supportive of NASA and the Vision. Most staff offered up their opinions concerning their member's position. Thus, this high number reflects more of a sense of member views despite the fact that most meetings were held with staff. A number responded that they weren't sure how their member felt about the NASA budget or the Vision, but only .06% indicated that their member was opposed to NASA's budget or the Vision.