



615 SIXTEENTH STREET, N.W.  
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

**JOHN J. SWEENEY**  
 PRESIDENT

**RICHARD L. TRUMKA**  
 SECRETARY-TREASURER

**LINDA CHAVEZ-THOMPSON**  
 EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

## **LEGISLATIVE ALERT!**

(202) 637-5090

December 8, 2005

Dear Conferee:

As the conference committee meets to reconcile the House (H.R. 3070) and Senate (S. 1281) versions of the 2006 authorization for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the AFL-CIO urges you to support a provision of the Senate bill that protects the integrity and quality of NASA's remaining civil servant workforce.

Section 151 of S. 1281, passed unanimously by the Senate, requires NASA to provide Congress with a "human capital strategy" to ensure that the agency has a workforce with the appropriate size and skills to carry out its programs. NASA would have to submit such a plan to Congress before the administration submits its FY 2007 budget request, and NASA would therefore be prohibited from implementing any reduction-in-force (RIF) before June 1, 2007.

If America is to remain preeminent in the fields of aeronautics and space exploration, NASA must preserve the unequalled intellectual capacity and independence of its civil service technical staff. Only civil servant experts, properly protected from political reprisal and insulated from external economic interests, can be trusted to tell Congress and American taxpayers the truth about tough questions such as safety and scientific validity.

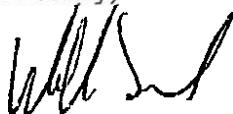
Independent in-house experts are also necessary to supervise NASA contracts and guide the decision-making of NASA management. Otherwise it would be all too easy for NASA management—technically-detached, politically-beholden, and rewarded for meeting short-term milestones—to trivialize or ignore risks that jeopardize NASA's long-term goals.

Yet for some time NASA management has neglected the agency's in-house research and technology development, and has instead outsourced contracts to support large-scale programs. Today the overwhelming majority of "employees" working for NASA are employed by private-sector entities, and therefore represent the interests of the private sector.

A RIF of 5 to 10 percent of NASA's remaining civil servant workforce would thus be disastrous for the agency. A RIF of this magnitude would not only seriously undermine the independence of NASA's scientists and engineers, but also the agency's recruiting ability and the morale of its remaining workforce. Such a RIF would also result in the loss of capabilities that NASA would ultimately have to replace at great expense.

Science, safety, and technical capability must drive NASA's mission—not political interest or private sector profit. The NASA authorization conference report must therefore protect the integrity and quality of NASA's dwindling civil servant workforce by requiring that a detailed, long-term human capital strategy be vetted by Congress prior to any reshaping of NASA's workforce. For all these reasons, we urge you to support Section 151 of S. 1281.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Samuel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and "S".

William Samuel, Director  
DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATION