



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS
AFL-CIO & CLC

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 400, Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-565-9016 • FAX 301-565-0018 • www.ifpte.org

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Contact: Matthew Biggs
(301) 565-9016

Congress to Pass NASA Authorization Bill
Congress Correctly Reasserts Its Oversight Role

SILVER SPRING, MD – Before adjourning for the year, the United States Congress is expected to approve *The National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2005*. The conference report properly embraces the President's Vision for Space Exploration, reinvigorates NASA's commitment to maintain the nation's pre-eminence in aeronautics research and development (R&D), mandates that NASA's core Life and Microgravity Science capabilities be sustained, preserves the nation's investment in NASA's world-class facilities, and perhaps most importantly, reforms NASA's accounting structure and practices to help restore programmatic and fiscal order.

Approving IFPTE's number-one priority, authorizers demanded a thoughtful re-evaluation and vetting of NASA's workforce issues by ensuring that the agency cannot effect any Reduction-In-Force prior to March 16, 2007. Authorizers further stipulated that NASA must first submit a detailed plan and consult with its unions and with Congress prior to implementing any workforce reshaping.

"This is a very good day for NASA and for the nation. Much to the credit of House Science Committee Chairman Boehlert (R-NY), Congress is reasserting its proper oversight of NASA", said Gregory Junemann, President of the International Federation of Professional & Technical Engineers (IFPTE), NASA's largest union.

"Through the leadership of Chairmen Boehlert and Calvert (R-CA) and Senator Hutchison (R-TX), as well as ranking members Gordon (D-TN) and Nelson (D-FL), a strong compromise between the Senate and House versions of the NASA bill was ultimately achieved. Representatives Udall (D-CO) and Kucinich (D-OH) and Senators DeWine (R-OH) and Allen (R-A) played key roles in defending NASA's Aeronautics R&D mission, which is crucial to America's future economic competitiveness as well as U.S. aviation safety and efficiency. Representative Honda (D-CA) and Senators Boxer (D-CA), Feinstein (D-CA) and DeWine were instrumental in protecting NASA's brain trust by mandating a thoughtful and orderly process for NASA's workforce planning. All of the above also worked to make sure that NASA's Life Science program will receive the

minimal level of funding needed to continue research on the impact of gravity and radiation on biological systems that is critically needed to support astronaut health and safety as they venture once again beyond earth's orbit.

“We are particularly grateful to Chairman Boehlert and ranking member Gordon for their tireless defense of NASA’s critical non-exploration missions. By demanding that NASA’s budgetary structure be changed to respect the integrity of NASA’s Science and Aeronautics missions, independent of NASA’s Exploration Systems and Space Operations missions, the bill makes NASA’s appropriations process once again meaningful, protects NASA’s Aeronautics and Earth/Space Science programs from cannibalization, and signals the end of the era of management's ever-changing operation plans. Hopefully, orderly programmatic planning and execution will now once again become the norm at NASA.

“Finally, we are truly gratified that the bill is a resounding endorsement of NASA, calling for significant budgetary growth commensurate with the significant mission growth called for by the President’s Vision for Space Exploration. We hope that this message is received loud and clear as the Office of Management and Budget deliberates NASA’s Fiscal Year 2007 budget submission.”

IFPTE will continue to work with Congress to address its ongoing concern with the gap between the Administration’s Space Vision rhetoric and its NASA budget proposals. It is becoming increasingly clear that in order to support the development of the next generation of spacecraft under Administrator Griffin’s accelerated timeline, NASA will either need to receive significantly more funding or it will need to move aggressively to retire the Shuttle sooner than 2010 and to postpone or curtail Space Station completion. IFPTE has called for a GAO study of the possible trade-offs in this regard so that Congress is fully informed of the fiscal and programmatic consequences.

To view the GAO request sent by IFPTE to Congress, please visit the IFPTE webpage at www.ifpte.org.

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