



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

August 26, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C 20502

Dear Mr. President:

Recently, you received a letter from several senators urging the Administration to move forward with the Space Launch System (SLS) and approve the program. We agree that it is time for the Administration to commit to the plan for the new heavy lift rocket. Further delays will only incur additional costs and the continued loss of critical skills that cannot be replaced. The letter also, however, called into question funds being spent for facility upgrades and support capabilities at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC) and there appears to be a misunderstanding regarding allocation of funds dedicated to development of the SLS as authorized by P.L. 111-267. In as much as concerns about this issue may have been brought to your attention, we are writing to clarify the intent of the law.

A new launch vehicle includes much more than just a design and build phase. Ground systems for rockets are as necessary to their design, development, and operation as the propulsion engine testing conducted on the engine test stands at Stennis Space Center — both of which are funded out of the SLS appropriation. There is a distinct difference between 21st Century Ground Systems that are part of the SLS, and the general construction upgrades at KSC for the 21st Century Launch Complex. NASA drew this distinction when it included work on the SLS ground systems in the FY 2011 operating plan. Further, Congressional appropriators reinforced this distinction last month in the final FY 2011 operating plan by appropriating funds for SLS ground operations at KSC.

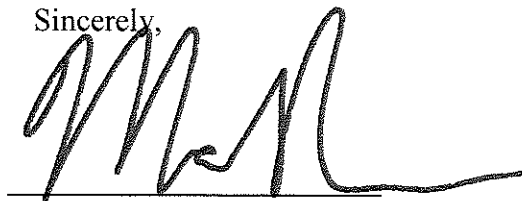
The NASA Authorization Act Congress passed last year requires the agency to immediately develop a new heavy lift vehicle with an initial operating capability by 2016. We all agreed that passage of this law was in the country's long-term national interest. In carrying out the law, NASA included SLS funding for work on infrastructure projects needed to test, process and launch the new rocket. In fact, these projects have been selected because they decrease development and operations costs for the new vehicle. For example, by removing old Shuttle launch support structures now and allowing SLS infrastructure to be built using existing launch pads, we're saving money and freeing up funds for rocket development and testing. Similarly, work to upgrade the existing crawler transporter, rather than building a new one, to accommodate the additional weight of the SLS is another example of a cost saving measure.

Therefore, we strongly support the continued use of SLS funds to develop a complete heavy-lift rocket, including the KSC projects in question.

Handwritten signature of Bill Nelson in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

U.S. Senator Bill Nelson

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Marco Rubio in black ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio