

Spaceport Strategies LLC

June 7, 2017

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

I am writing to express my strong support of the Committee on Science, Space and Technology's markup of the American Space Commerce Free Enterprise Act (ASCFEA), as introduced by Chairman Smith, Chairman Babin, and Representative Bridenstine.

This legislation makes clear that the Committee has given great thought to a long view of how to best enable American industry and entrepreneurs to pursue space commerce activities aimed at exploring, developing, and utilizing space resources.

It is especially encouraging for its "light touch" approach, and the explicit limitations on U.S. Government actions that would delay or inhibit U.S. companies from pursuing space commerce activities. Having been engaged in both the Government and private industry commercial space policy deliberations over the past 30 years, I believe the Committee's policy and regulatory approach is coming at just the right time to help ensure our nation has the most competitive posture to opening the space frontier for economic benefit.

There continues to be much discussion within the space community about many aspects of how to best organize Government functions to keep pace with rapidly evolving private sector capabilities and innovation. But the Committee is correctly focusing on what is needed now to best ensure non-traditional space activities are able to flourish, and is to be commended for moving forward with this initiative to provide a predictable investment and operations environment for exciting new commercial space ventures which promise to reach to the Moon and beyond.

Designation of the Secretary of Commerce and an Assistant Secretary-level Office of Space Commerce is a reasonable and effective solution to addressing the administrative requirements for international treaty compliance without intrusive, burdensome impacts on the industry. It is important that there be a bright line of responsibilities between the U.S. Department of Transportation – whose role is to promote, foster, and enable commercial space transportation – and an expanded role for Department of Commerce to promote, foster, and enable space commerce in utilizing in-space resources by administering the requisite U.S. Government registration of non-governmental activities in space to pursue that utilization while ensuring compliance with treaty obligations.

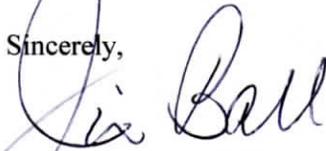
I formed my consulting company after many years in both Government and industry, a career still dedicated to advancing both U.S. commercial space transportation capabilities and commercial uses of space resources.

Back in the middle 1980s, the nation's commercial space policy was just beginning to take shape, and then, as now, there was considerable discussion about what agencies should have which roles in promoting, encouraging, fostering, and, when necessary, regulating the activities of private entities and commercial providers. The Department of Transportation, Department of Commerce, and NASA all had a role to play, and as you've recognized, they still do.

The commercial space industry – both its transportation component and its resource utilization component – are no longer in infancy. I commend the Committee leadership, and its staff, for engaging the commercial space industry and considering the many inputs and recommendations you have received as you move into markup.

Thanks for your hard work, your thoughtful perspective on how U.S. leadership and interests in space can be best achieved, and for the courage to take bold steps to ensure our nation will be second to none in pursuing the exploration of space and the utilization of its resources to improve lives on earth while expanding humanity outward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Ball". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jim Ball, President
Spaceport Strategies LLC