

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2015

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20546

The Honorable Deborah L. James
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Administrator Bolden and Secretary James:

In light of the recent catastrophic in-flight failures on June 28, 2015, and October 28, 2014, we write to express concern about our nation's assured access to space. These unfortunate events were devastating to our nation's commercial space mission, but they pertain to our future national security missions as well. We are committed to our nation's leadership in space, but equally believe we must be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars when it comes to achieving our priorities and goals for spaceflight. Following the SpaceX Falcon 9 mishap, US Government officials indicated that, because this was a commercial launch conducted under authority of a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) license, SpaceX would be responsible for conducting the investigation and reporting on this mishap, subject to FAA oversight. We have serious reservations about this approach and are concerned whether the investigation and engineering rigor applied will be sufficient to prevent future military launch mishaps. Accordingly, we have the following questions concerning the nature of the investigation, the extent of oversight activities, and the requirements that must be met before approving a return to flight:

- In light of the recent launch failure, will the Falcon 9 be decertified for military launch and if not, what external formal reviews, methodologies, and requirements will SpaceX have to meet to return the Falcon 9 to flight? Please ensure you list the specific roles and oversight responsibilities of NASA and the Air Force. Will this investigation be held to the same standards as a failure during a military launch?
- Given the continual evolution and uncertified upgrades to the Falcon 9 rocket configuration to date, as well as the potential courses of action to fix the anomaly which caused the failure, will any future changes made to the Falcon 9 rocket require a new certification and licensing? If not, why?

We appreciate your prompt reply to these questions.



Mike Coffman
Member of Congress

Sincerely,



J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



Robert Aderholt
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Mo Brooks
Member of Congress



Ken Buck
Member of Congress



Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress



Tom Cole
Member of Congress



Denny Heck
Member of Congress



Jody Hice
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



Martha Roby
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Scott Tipton
Member of Congress