

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We write in support of the Department of Defense and the Air Force's approach to provide reliable, competitive, and cost-effective access to space. Allowing competition rather than directing government investment to only one technology or company will result in a better, more capable launch vehicle that will best serve national security, and ultimately yield better value and services for taxpayers' investment and save costs.

In its budget for Fiscal Year 2017, the Air Force requested \$1.2 billion across five years to invest in domestic launch systems. The end goal of these investments is two long-term domestic, commercially viable launch providers that meet national-security space requirements. This approach ensures the United States maintains its policy of assured access to space, enabling our ability to meet evolving space threats. We write to you in support of the Air Force's request and focus on the end-goal of complete, robust launch systems. Critical funding should not be restricted to specific components, such as a first-stage engine.

Congress' direction over the past several years has been clear: to end U.S. dependence on the Russian-made RD-180 and create a competitive environment that will continue the nation's policy of assured access to space while reducing the cost of launch. In the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress supported funding for both engine development and launch-system investment.

Investing in the entire launch system through government and industry cost-share partnerships – rather than a specific component – is the fastest, safest, and most affordable way for the taxpayer to achieve these objectives. Last year, then-Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Frank Kendall shared the same sentiment when he testified that, "Assured access to space requires end-to-end space launch service and not just a rocket engine. As many Department of Defense witnesses have testified to this and other congressional committees, simply replacing the RD-180 with a new engine will not deliver the performance of the current design." Under Secretary Kendall went on to note, "The Department would strongly prefer to not have to pay for the development of an RD-180 engine replacement that would benefit only one launch service provider."

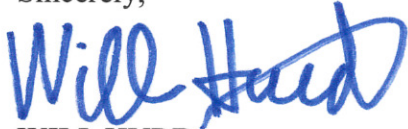
The Air Force's investment into the next generation of launch vehicles will ensure the United States maintains a robust launch industry with at least two healthy providers and without pre-selecting a technology. Restricting funding only for a domestic engine will result in higher costs for the taxpayer and risks delays in ending use of the RD-180 engine.

Cost-effective investments by the government to ensure reliable access to space are all the more vital to national security in the face of growing threats. Evolving threats from countries such as China and Russia highlight the importance of space and the need for U.S. space superiority for our national security. In 2013 and 2014, Russia and China launched satellites demonstrating new capabilities to threaten U.S. or allied nations' satellites. These threats are real, they are rapidly evolving, and our

ability to launch new, more resilient assets into orbit requires reliable, capable and cost-effective systems.

We appreciate your attention to this matter, and hope you will continue promoting competition and maintaining our nation's assured access to space by supporting the Air Force request to invest in domestic launch systems.

Sincerely,



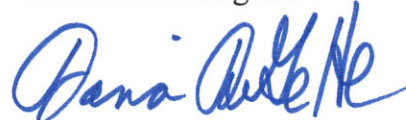
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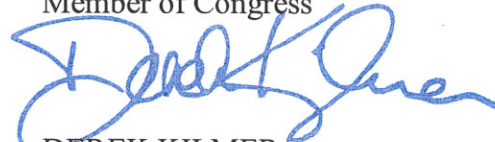
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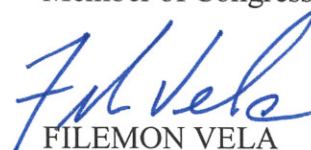
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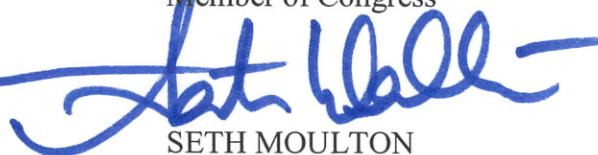
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