

# 2017 Citizens for Space Exploration Congressional Visits Report (May 23-25, 2017)

## Trip Summary

The 2017 CSE Congressional visits were a success and helped advance support for human space exploration and demonstrate a large, grassroots constituency for space exploration. The 26th annual trip included 96 travelers, representing 27 states, who conducted 401 Congressional office visits. The diverse group of travelers included elected officials, 35 students studying engineering or related technical fields, industry representatives, and community leaders. The Congressional reception was well attended by over 50 staffers, and included remarks from 8 Members of Congress.

A few interesting statistics from our meeting feedback surveys include:

- 81.5% House visits, 18.5% Senate. Members were present at 14% of the meetings.
- 73% were “very engaged” in the meeting.
- 87 staffers had visited a NASA center.
- 75% were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about NASA’s exploration programs.
- 85% of staffers were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about the benefits derived from the space program – Education was mentioned in 73% of meetings, economic benefits in 54%, spinoffs in 45%, and exploration/discovery in 39%.
- 66% of visits were considered “very supportive” and 27% “somewhat supportive” of human space exploration.
- 25% of offices said they would support additional funding for the space program.
- Specific concerns focused around the President’s budget request and funding the program.

## Visits overview

Each team consisted of a leader and 3-4 other travelers including at least one student. The teams visited Congressional offices of their home states, discussed the exploration programs, and solicited feedback from the office concerning the value and direction concerning America’s space exploration program.

Teams also provided folders that included:

- Citizens for Space Exploration overview document
- Deep Space Exploration Incremental Approach 1-pager
- ISS Research 1-pager
- Space Exploration Spinoffs 1-pager
- NASA budget pie chart
- State-specific document with NASA funds spent in that state
- Explore, Pioneer, and Innovate 1 pager

Key Messages included continuity for NASA human space exploration programs, funding of the missions set forth in the 2017 NASA Authorization Act, and NASA’s role in supporting American leadership, education, innovation, health care, and quality of life for less than half of one percent of the budget. Talking points also included concern about challenges to U.S. leadership in space, and the importance of restoring U.S. space launch capabilities to support human space flight.

Team members discussed their specific personal reasons for support for America's space program. For example:

- A healthy space program is important to inspire students and get them into STEM careers.
- What is happening in space exploration and why it is important to the economy and to business.
- NASA is an important investment and provides a wide range of spinoff benefits.
- Additional reasons such as leadership, education, technological innovation and competitiveness.

#### Kick-Off Reception – Tuesday, May 23, 2017

Brian Freedman emceed the program in his role as the trip chairman. Speakers included Nick Cummings (Senate Commerce Committee), Mary Lynne Dittmar (Dittmar Associates, Executive Director, Coalition for Deep Space Exploration), Joe Mayer (CSE Chair), and Stacey DeFore (Colorado Team Coordinator). Topics covered included CSE history, Hill do's and don'ts, a space industry update, a legislative update, and a run-through of the drop-off materials and key messages. Following the meeting, each team met, strategized and planned for the following two days of visits.

#### Congressional Reception – Wednesday, May 24, 2017

The Citizens for Space Exploration hosted a Congressional reception for Members of Congress and their staff. Eight Congressional Members spoke at the reception and over 100 staff attended. Congressional speakers were:

- Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)
- Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX)
- Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX-36)
- Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL-5)
- Rep. Gene Green (D-TX-29)
- Rep. Will Hurd (R-TX-23)
- Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX-22)
- Rep. Randy Weber (R-TX-14)

#### Feedback

Some key feedback received from the teams:

- Strong bipartisan support for NASA. There was more understanding of NASA's space exploration programs than in previous years and support for Mars as the ultimate destination.
- There was strong interest in lunar related missions as the next step to Mars.
- NASA's education budget was a concern of many offices.
- There was a noticeable lack of confusion as to what NASA's mission was, that had been present in previous years.
- There was strong support for NASA to stay the course on the human space programs.
- Recognition of the benefits resulting from the space program including areas of STEM education, work force development and general contributions to local economies across the country (including small businesses).
- Response to our platform of ISS, Orion, SLS, and Commercial Crew/Cargo was very positive.
- The budget is always a challenge.
- NASA and industry will have to continuously make the case for the value of spaceflight.
- Many staffers asked to be contacted when a specific vote or action was needed.