

2015 Citizens for Space Exploration D.C. Trip - May 19-21, 2015

Trip Summary

The 2015 DC Trip was a success and helped advance support for human space exploration and demonstrate a large, grassroots constituency for space exploration. The 24th annual trip included 95 travelers (we had 104 in '14 and 97 in '13) representing 23 states who conducted a record 376 congressional office visits (up from 354 in '14). The diverse group of travelers included elected officials, 32 university students majoring in engineering or related technical fields of study, industry representatives and community leaders. The Congressional reception was well attended and included remarks from 8 Members of Congress and attended by over 50 staffers.

A few interesting statistics from our surveys:

- 82% House visits, 18% Senate.
- 96% were “very engaged” or “moderately engaged” in the meeting.
- 121 staffers had visited a NASA center and /or seen a launch.
- 81% of staffers were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about NASA’s exploration programs.
- 84% of staffers were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about the benefits derived from the space program – Education was mentioned in 72% of meetings, economic benefits in 40%, spinoffs in 45%, and exploration/discovery in 36%.
- Major concerns discussed were competing budget demands and geopolitical issues (Russia and China).
- 58% of visits were considered “very supportive” and 21% “somewhat supportive” of human space exploration.
- Very few expressed a preference between an asteroid or lunar approach to a Mars mission.
- NASA benefits that resonated well (in ranked order): Education, spinoffs, economic benefits, exploration/discovery, medical, U.S. leadership, and national defense.

Visits overview

Each team consisted of a leader and 2-3 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
- The NASA Elements of Human Space Flight 1-pager
- ISS Spinoffs 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 pagers

Key Messages included support for NASA’s human space exploration portfolio, 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 Russia and the increasing importance of a well-funded NASA in uncertain geopolitical times.

Team members focused their specific reason for support – for example:

- Student: why education is important to inspire students and get them into STEM careers
- Industry: What is happening in space exploration and why it is important to the economy and to business
- Elected officials: Why NASA is an important investment and important to communities, the spinoff benefits, etc.
- Community leaders and economic development officials: a wide variety of reasons for supporting including leadership, education, spinoffs, etc.

Kick-Off Reception – Tuesday, May 19, 2015

Brian Freedman emceed the program in his role as the trip chairman. Speakers including Charlie Bolden, NASA Administrator, Nick Cummings from the Senate Commerce Committee, Joe Mayer, Florida Team Coordinator, and Kelly Page, the trip coordinator. Topics covered included CSE history, Hill do's and don'ts, a legislative update, ISS spinoffs, 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 20, 2015

The Citizens for Space Exploration hosted a Congressional Reception for Members of Congress and their staff. Eight Congressional Members spoke at the reception and approximately 50 staff from both Congressional personal offices and committees attended. Congressional speakers were:

- Roger Wicker (R-MS-Sen)
- Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18)
- John Culberson (R-TX-7)
- Pete Olson (R-TX-22)
- Mo Brooks (R-AL-5)
- Steven Palazzo (R-MS-4)
- Dr. Brian Babin (R-TX-36)
- Randy Weber (R-TX-14)

Feedback

Some key takeaways, based on feedback received from the teams:

- Strong bipartisan support for NASA. There was more understanding of NASA's space exploration programs than in previous years.
- 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
- Response to our platform of ISS, Orion, SLS, and Commercial Crew/Cargo was very positive.
- Continued interest in NASA's Commercial Crew and Cargo efforts in low earth orbit and the associated companies.

- Generally agreed that Mars was the ultimate destination for human exploration; did not state a definitive preference for lunar vs. asteroid mission options for accomplishing this long-term objective.
- The budget is always a challenge.
- NASA and industry will have to continuously make the case for the value of spaceflight.
- Recognition of the importance of Space Launch System and Orion to support deep-space exploration.
- Many staffers asked to be contacted when a specific vote or action was needed.

Local Elected Officials Attending the Trip

- League City Mayor Tim Paulissen
- Houston Councilmember Dave Martin
- Nassau Bay Councilmember Jonathan Amdur
- Friendswood Councilmember Dr. Pat McGinnis
- Seabrook Councilman Robert Llorente