

# 2023 Citizens for Space Exploration Congressional Visits Report (May 22-24, 2023)



## Trip Summary

The 2023 CSE Congressional visits were a success and helped advance support for human space exploration and demonstrate a large, grassroots constituency for space exploration. The 31st annual trip included 76 travelers, representing 21 states, who conducted 323 Congressional office visits. These meetings were in addition to 57 appointments with Freshmen Member offices conducted in March. The diverse group of travelers included educators, 30 students studying engineering or related STEM fields, industry representatives, and community leaders. Four Members of Congress made remarks at the Congressional

Reception on May 23. The reception was well attended by over 50 staffers representing 34 congressional offices.

A few interesting statistics from our meeting feedback surveys include:

- 57% of House member offices were visited and 59% of Senate offices.
- 79% were “very engaged” in the meeting.
- 91 staffers had visited a NASA center.
- 85% were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about NASA’s exploration programs.
- 86% of staffers were “very knowledgeable” or “somewhat knowledgeable” about the benefits derived from the space program – Education was mentioned in 83% of meetings, economic benefits in 66%, leadership in 47%, national defense in 42%, spinoffs in 37%, and exploration/discovery in 31%.
- 75% of visits were considered “highly supportive” and 19% “moderately supportive” of human space exploration.
- Specific concerns focused on the current debt ceiling discussions and their potential impact on the NASA budget.



## 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, as well as other, states and discussed the exploration programs including Artemis and ISS, commercial crew and cargo, a future bi-partisan authorization bill, full NASA funding, and solicited feedback from the office concerning their support of America’s space exploration program. Teams also provided folders that included:

- Citizens for Space Exploration overview document
- Orion Vehicle Chart
- Starliner Crew Vehicle Chart
- SLS Capabilities Chart
- Federal spending pie chart highlighting NASA budget

Additionally, each congressional office was provided the NASA spending link <https://prod.nais.nasa.gov/cgi-bin/npdv/map.cgi> in a follow-up thank you email.

Key messages included continuity for NASA human space exploration programs including Artemis, ISS, and commercial cargo & crew; robust funding for NASA's return to the moon (Artemis), 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 federal budget. Talking points also included concern about challenges to U.S. leadership in space, and the need for a new NASA authorization bill.

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

- A healthy space program is important to inspire students and steer them toward STEM careers.
- What is happening in space exploration and why it is important to the economy, education, space leadership, and to business.
- NASA is an important investment and provides a wide range of spinoff benefits for less than .5 % of the federal budget.
- Additional reasons such as leadership, education, technological innovation and competitiveness.



#### Traveler's Briefing Reception – Monday, May 22, 2023

Brian Freedman kicked off the program with an introduction and acknowledgment of the Trip Co-Chairs. Speakers included Benjy Nuemann (Director of the Human Spaceflight Capabilities Division for Space Operations), Tom Culligan (Senior Director, Government Relations, Raytheon), Kelly Page (D.C. Trip Co-Chair) and Kelbi Culwell (Texas Team Coordinator). Topics covered included CSE history, major NASA Programs overview, 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 – Tuesday, May 23, 2023

The Citizens for Space Exploration hosted a Congressional reception in the Rayburn HOB for Members of Congress and their staff. Over 50 staff attended. Congressional representatives attending were:

- Rep. Brian Babin (R-TX-36)
- Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX-18)
- Rep. Dale Strong (R-AL-05)
- Rep. Ron Estes (R-KS-04)

### Feedback

Some key feedback received from the teams:

- Budget uncertainties due to the debt ceiling discussions
- Strong bipartisan support for NASA. There was more understanding of NASA's space exploration programs than in previous years (85% knowledgeable about NASA programs).
- Recognition and strong support for STEM education resulting from human space exploration programs.
- Recognition that US leadership in space & human space exploration is being threatened by other countries (China) and that we cannot take US leadership for granted.
- Many offices requested to be contacted with specific information on a NASA authorization as it became available.