



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
OF FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST

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OPINION-EDITORIAL – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Congressional Committee Kicking Us When We're Down
by Lynda Weatherman

It appears the House Appropriations Committee has chosen to kick Florida while it's down. While the Space Coast is still reeling from the effects of the Space Shuttle retirement, the House Appropriations Committee in Washington has singled out Florida and seeks to cut or redirect funds originally allocated to Kennedy Space Center. The Space Coast's congressional delegation needs to be screaming at the top of their lungs to defend their region that's already economically overwhelmed.

With almost sniper-like stealth, congressional members on the Committee are proposing to slash or re-allocate funds intended for development of KSC's 21st Century Launch Complex, Heavy-Lift Ground Operations and Space Shuttle refurbishment. These projects represent the most immediate source of jobs at Kennedy Space Center.

The 21st Century Launch Complex will provide the most immediate source of job potential through the design, engineering and construction to transition KSC from Shuttle to new Government and Commercial vehicles. This keeps talent local and enhances our overall competitiveness on the global economic development stage. The committee report slashes it by more than half, after already substantial cuts last year.

Plus, after all the competition and media hype, they also propose eliminating funding to secure Space Shuttle Orbiters before their transition to museums, including Atlantis for display in Florida. This alone means more than 1000 lost local jobs.

It's hard to understand how such proposals make it into a congressional recommendation, but it is worth mentioning that key leadership on the committee hail from states with whom we compete to secure government space programs and commercial job-creating business relocation and expansion projects. If this represents what the House thinks is good policy for space, and for Florida, then this is a very disturbing development.

These actions aren't about pork; they're about killing infrastructure investment intended to make KSC more competitive in commercial and government markets for launch, processing

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and manufacturing. If this sabotage is effective, not only will the Space Coast be crippled in efforts to rebuild our Space sector, but the billions invested by Americans over decades in its premier launch complex will be wasted, all while other competing facilities are built and modernized with our tax dollars.

This should not be another deliberation about NASA's mission; it must be a battle against the political treachery that threatens the future of KSC, while other states build up their capabilities with NASA and other funding. Our congressional representatives have an imperative to start the debate, get into a fray, and fight to ensure we do not lose foundations to help us recover economically.

These cuts may come up for a vote in several weeks. Our Congressional representatives must act immediately and decisively to defend Florida's economic future. Florida's voting public carries a lot of political clout, and it is time for our delegation to leverage it.

Lynda Weatherman is president & CEO of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast.

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