



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
OF FLORIDA'S SPACE COAST**

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**OPINION-EDITORIAL – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Florida Primary Important Asset to Presidential Hopefuls**

*Space must be a platform candidates stand on*

*by Lynda Weatherman*

As the GOP primary looms over Florida, the Space Coast must be at the forefront of the candidates' minds for both the future of aerospace and our broader high-tech community.

Over the last 20 years, the road to the White House has run through the I-4 Corridor. More late money, attention and campaign resources have been directed to this region than any other part of the country. This area's importance to the presidential race has intensified now that Florida has 29 Electoral College votes, compared to 27 in 2008. Florida is the largest swing state in the country and, therefore, has never been more important.

Because of this political fortitude, and as a matter of national security and global competitiveness, the candidates must make space a formidable part of their respective platforms. The space industry was Florida's first high profile, high-wage industry and launched the high-tech juggernaut that the Space Coast, and much of Florida, is today. Secondly, as was made painfully evident with Sputnik and the start of the space race, space is the military high ground and it is surrendered at our peril. Finally, much of America's technological prowess of the last generation was the product of the space program. To abandon that capability is to condemn this nation to a second class status.

The future of space needs to include a definitive program that we know will succeed. Whether this is the Space Launch System (SLS) or commercial space, we need commitment and sustained appropriation. The Constellation program was cancelled due to inadequate funding. We cannot continue to invest our future in similar programs that we know will suffer the same fate. Candidates must commit to assuring adequate funding for SLS, or offer us a compelling Plan B. This community, and this nation, cannot endure another cancellation, followed by confusion. Other countries will continue to look to the U.S. for leadership in space exploration. We need to ensure our space program stays intact to live up to our reputation.

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With the Space Coast still reeling from job loss, this region has emerged as the face of challenges in national space policy. The candidates want and need our votes, so it is incumbent upon each of them to demonstrate his understanding of the issues surrounding the Space Coast and our high-tech companies, and how this fits into the bigger issues of national security and global leadership. We need a vision that illustrates space as a national priority. We have the delegates; each candidate needs to demonstrate why he should get them.

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

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