

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to express our strong support for the development of a new, American liquid-fueled hydrocarbon rocket booster engine. The independent review recently conducted for the Secretary of Defense concluded that an advanced hydrocarbon booster engine acquisition is required to ensure availability and healthy competition for national security space launch capabilities, and that a focused risk reduction effort prior to an engine competition is needed as a cost and schedule-savings measure. Further, the Congress, in consideration of your fiscal year 2015 budget request, has demonstrated its strong support for such an engine.

The path forward requires both careful consideration and decisive action. We are especially interested in a path forward which leads to a fully developed engine no later than 2019, available to multiple launch vehicle companies. Confident feedback from the aerospace and defense industry, as well as consistent concerns expressed at hearings about availability of, and reliance upon, Russian engines, warrants a focus on 2019 as the goal for a completed engine. A completed engine, available to multiple launch providers would assure access to space for our national security payloads, as well as support competition and a healthy industrial base.

The strong Congressional support to date for a new American engine of this type stems from a long-standing requirement, concern for the US rocket propulsion industrial base, and from concern over recent actions taken by Russia in Ukraine and threats by leadership of the Russian Federation to stop supplying rocket engines to the United States. While no cutoff of Russian-made rocket engines has yet taken place, our support for a new engine is widespread and strong.

In its version of the Fiscal Year 2015 Defense Appropriations Bill, the House expressed concern about an ongoing dependence on Russian launch technology. The bill provided \$220M to accelerate the development and fielding of an American made state of the art liquid rocket boost engine. Much of the initial risk reduction work has been done, and we believe it is time to finish the job. These monies should be focused on funding a cost efficient engine development program that is completed in an expeditious manner. Significant dilution of the monies to other technology efforts runs the risk of delaying the engine development program and perpetuating U.S. reliance on Russian launch engines. We hope you share our concern.

Regarding the use of public-private partnerships, if such partnerships are considered, we

will require a thorough consideration of verifiable cost-share, auditability of the specific use of federal funds, schedule requirements, and -- perhaps most important of all -- agreements which ensure that the U.S. government retains intellectual property rights enabling the engine to be available to multiple launch companies.

With the above goals in mind, we believe that the surest way to nurture a competitive U.S. launch industry is to develop and field an advanced liquid hydrocarbon rocket booster engine. NASA and the U.S. Air Force have made significant strides on hydrocarbon booster engine risk reduction. Through competitively-awarded, milestone based, fixed price contracts, NASA has already committed the investment of approximately \$50 million dollars -- a direct down-payment on a future American booster engine. By making use of these efforts, some of them already completed, the Air Force could reduce the technical and programmatic risks and thus better inform a full-scale engine acquisition. History has shown that a focused risk reduction effort can result in hundreds of millions in savings and is the surest route to an engine by 2019.

We also encourage the establishment of a program office within the Air Force to manage the development and acquisition of this engine. This office should cooperate with the National Institute for Rocket Propulsion Systems (NIRPS). The benefit of using NIRPS to oversee the risk reduction efforts is that such an arrangement would make available to the Air Force rocket propulsion experts from across the country and from various disciplines to help evaluate and manage a process which will achieve two goals: 1) a hydrocarbon booster engine in the half million pound thrust range, capable of ending our reliance on foreign sources and developed in the shortest time possible, 2) ensure national security space launch competition -- made possible by having an engine, and intellectual property, available to multiple companies.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters. We look forward to continuing to support the development of a new American hydrocarbon booster engine by 2019.

Sincerely,

David B. Abney

C. F. Dutch Zuppisberg

Mo Brabe

Doris O. Matsui

J.M. Clark

James Fisher

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Hal Rogers, Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations

Nita Lowey, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations

Buck McKeon, Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee

Adam Smith, Ranking Member  
House Armed Services Committee

9-17-2014 Letter supporting the development of a new, American, liquid-fueled hydrocarbon rocket booster engine

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

*Signatures, Page 1:*

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Mo Brooks (AL-05)

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*Signatures, Page 2:*

Tom McClintock (CA-04)  
Spencer Bachus (AL-06)  
Tom Cotton (AR-04)  
Pete Olson (TX-22)  
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