

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
SD-142, Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Appropriations Committee
SH-125, Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Shaheen:

We write to share our strong support for continued funding and report language in your FY 2019 Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Appropriations bill to support upgrades to and investments in NASA's only space launch range, located at the Wallops Flight Facility (WFF), which serves a critical role in launching cargo resupply missions to the International Space Station (ISS). We appreciate your support for Wallops range upgrade funding in the FY 2018 Omnibus, which continued longstanding Congressional support for this program.

For several years, the Committee has included funding and report language through the 21st Century Launch Complex program to ensure the range at WFF doesn't fall behind the capabilities funded by the Department of Defense at the Eastern and Western Ranges in Florida and California. Unfortunately, NASA has no similar program to ensure institutional investment in its own launch range, so your continued support for the WFF launch range has been critical to ensuring the agency provides a level of investment each year to ensure its range remains up-to-date and ready to support a variety of NASA and other missions. The committee's support for this account over the last several years has been instrumental to improving launch infrastructure at WFF, but it is our understanding that there are more \$65 million in unfunded improvement projects in need of funding to ensure a steady pace of launch range and capability upgrades on par with the Eastern Range.

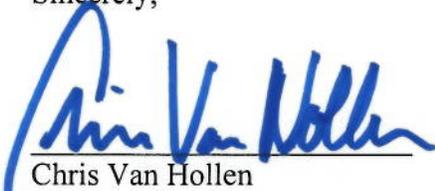
As you work to develop your FY 2019 bill, we urge you to continue the Omnibus funding and report language, whether as part of the 21st Century Launch Complex Program or in another account, that directs that no less than \$10 million to WFF for launch range improvements in addition to any other institutional construction projects already requested in the budget, such as a long overdue project to restore the eroded shoreline at Wallops.

Specifically, we urge you to include the following report language in your FY 2019 report, whether as part of the 21st Century Launch Complex Program or as part of another program designed to provide an annual investment in launch range infrastructure at NASA's only launch range:

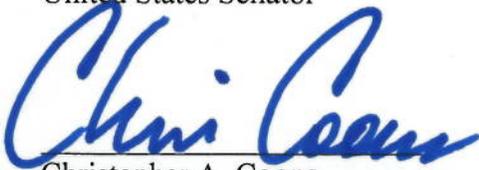
The Committee notes that maintaining multiple launch sites contributes to assured access to the ISS in case of natural disaster, national security event, or launch accident. The program's authorized purposes include projects at all NASA-owned launch facilities. As such, the Committee directs no less than \$10 million be directed toward filling critical maintenance, capacity, and range safety gaps at the Wallops Flight Facility launch complex, and further directs NASA to take into consideration the full potential of all NASA-owned launch complexes and its space launch range.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, as well as your continued support for improving NASA's launch infrastructure to support the ISS mission. This is a top priority for NASA Wallops and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, which recently launched the return-to-flight mission of Orbital ATK's Antares rocket and Cygnus cargo spacecraft to resupply the ISS, and will continue to support this mission through at least the end of the CRS-2 contract in 2024.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator


Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator
Tom Carper
United States Senator
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator