

## Squandering America's Leadership in Exploration ... Is American Leadership Predictably Too Unreliable?

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In the 5 May 2014 edition of Space News<sup>1</sup> U.S. Representative Frank Wolf (R-VA) opined that American leadership in Space exploration is being squandered by the present presidential administration. The sad fact is that politicians have rarely been advocates for Space except as a tool for winning the cold war<sup>2</sup> or winning reelection in a district reliant upon Space. Even President Kennedy's famous challenge to go to the Moon was motivated by beating the Soviet Union in a public, non-violent battle rather than by idealism or the intrinsic merits of Space travel. The sentiment expressed by The Honorable Mr. Wolf (relying on or complaining about government's funding of Space) is misplaced. Increasing funding to energize a vigorous Space program is not what the voting public has asked for<sup>3</sup>, so not what politicians in general will provide. The U.S. Government should not be looked to for reliable funding for human expansion into the solar system.

On the other hand, we live in a most interesting period when there are those who perceive a motive to be in Space and have money to pay for it (e.g., Jeff Bezos, Paul Allen, Elon Musk, and Richard Branson). This customer base is independent of government vacillation and partisan posturing, and has shown greater foresight and stability. Witness Mr. Bezos adopting the motto "*Gradatim Ferociter*", meaning "step-by-step, ferociously" to show that a long term program to achieve his goals is planned<sup>4</sup>. Serving and expanding this customer base is where Space advocates should devote their efforts, with an eye toward sustainable commercial use and permanent human settlement whenever profit can be reasonably assured. Only in this way does the historical record of the Space age suggest that mankind will achieve the security and unlock the wealth that expansion into the solar system promises.

### Sources Cited

<sup>1</sup> "Squandering America's Leadership in Exploration". Frank Wolf, Space News, 5 May 2014. <http://www.spacenews.com/article/opinion/40471squandering-america's-leadership-in-exploration>. Accessed 12:50 pm, 19 November 2014.

<sup>2</sup> "JFK and the Moon", Paul Spudis, Smithsonian Air and Space Magazine, 24 November 2013.

<sup>3</sup> "Polls Suggest Support for Space Exploration but not Bigger Budgets". Jeff Foust, Space Politics. 24 Jul 2011. <http://www.spacepolitics.com/2011/07/24/polls-suggest-support-for-space-exploration-but-not-bigger-budgets/>. Accessed 12:30 pm, 19 November 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Blue Origin homepage, <http://www.blueorigin.com>. Accessed 12:40 pm, 19 November 2014.

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