

Suggestions Regarding a Department of Space and the Easing of Space Access

William H. Knuth*

Congress has long been using NASA as a social service agency to distribute slush funds to favored states and regions of the country, as well as to favored institutions and companies. The underlying reasons for these distributions are not always in the best interests of NASA or the country's goals regarding its future in Space. I suggest that the time has come for a frank discussion about how NASA can be made more independent of congressional whimsy, and /or change in policies of different Administrations. One way of doing this would be to shift this country's Space interests to the Department level within the Federal Government. All Federally funded Space activities could be under the Department of Space, including military Space activities, other than active duty operations. While still under Government leadership, the level of autonomy would be much greater.

A parallel consideration is that it is important for us as a country to come to terms with the myth of cost savings and other benefits via competitive procurement. I suggest that the time has also come for a frank discussion about a new method of procurement that is more efficient (Knuth 2014). The time, talent, and technical waste involved in proposal preparation and evaluation and the distortions of award selections by Congressional involvement makes the entire process a farce. The net savings, if any, is often washed away by the program realities masked in the proposal in order to influence the award. In order to implement a new method of procurement, the new Department of Space would need to work out a new procurement practice that would favor supplier selection by deliberate development of skill sets with the flexibility to extend to the embodiment of new technologies as they evolve. All engineering and administrative personnel should be productively involved in useful development or production projects at all times.

The above will require the drafting of a Department of Space Charter that must be structured to grow past the limited NASA vision of only having responsibility for Space exploration and become that of anticipating and providing for the needs of what can be termed Space public utilities and services. Companies, large and small, require avenues of

Space access, depots, such as LOX depots (Martin 2015), power supplies, waste and debris disposal, search and rescue operations, communications hubs, security services, and all manner of other public utilities and services in Space. Individual companies cannot build business plans that close financially if each company must provide its own utilities, without having the authority to provide for its own security.

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*Member, Space Propulsion Synergy Team.