



October 23, 2007

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chair, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Mollohan:

I am writing on behalf of the 148,000 members and affiliates of the American Psychological Association (APA) to urge Conferees to adopt an amendment in the final Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill that would add \$1 billion to the NASA budget and to emphasize the importance of psychological research in the conference report.

The Senate approved an amendment on October 4 that would add \$1 billion to NASA's FY08 budget. This is a critical first step in addressing NASA's mounting fiscal pressures. Over the last 20 years, NASA's research budget has gone down steadily, with space exploration expanding at about the same rate. The result is a significant and increasing gap in life sciences and human factors knowledge – knowledge that is critical for successful space exploration.

Psychological research is needed to improve both the safety and efficiency of our current and future aerospace systems. Human Factors research provides a driving force for this effort by focusing on designing systems around the needs and abilities of the astronauts in order to optimize human user well-being and overall system performance. Human Factors researchers focus on reducing errors by designing systems that work as the user expects them to work.

Psychological scientists in the field of augmented cognition, for example, are studying methods to extend the information management capacity of individuals through computational systems. Imagine systems that are cognitively aware and can sense when the user is overloaded, or determine what needs to be done next and automatically adapt. Such a system would improve human decision-making and allow humans to function in environments, such as space flight, that are extremely challenging.

In closing, we urge Conferees of the CJS Appropriations bill to show support for psychological science by keeping in the final bill the Senate-passed amendment that adds \$1 billion to the NASA budget. The future of space exploration demands it. Please contact APA's Legislative and Federal Affairs Officer, Dr. Elizabeth Hoffman, at (202) 336-5949 or ehoffman@apa.org, if you have any questions or are in need of additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Steve Breckler".

Steven J. Breckler, Ph.D.
Executive Director for Science

CC: Rodney Frelinghuysen, Ranking Minority Member