

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2002

January 27, 2004

The Honorable Sean O'Keefe  
Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
300 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator O'Keefe:

We are writing to express our deep concerns about your recent decision to cancel the final repair mission to the Hubble Space Telescope. We urge you to reconsider this decision, which effectively terminates what NASA itself has called the "most productive, cost-effective satellite mission ever launched."

NASA's 2000 biennial report on Hubble's activities underscored that "[n]ot since Galileo turned his telescope toward the heavens in 1610 has any event so changed our understanding of the Universe as the Hubble Space Telescope." This view was echoed by an article which appeared in the *Washington Post* on January 18, 2002, declaring Hubble "the most successful astronomical exercise in history." Indeed, during its fourteen years in service, Hubble has led to a remarkable number of discoveries, allowing us to confirm the existence of massive black holes, view the formation of planets, and see 12 billion light years into our past. These are but a few of Hubble's myriad achievements.

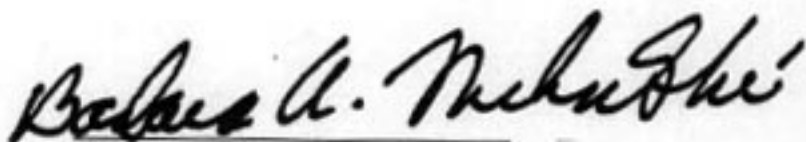
Hubble continues to provide us with data of immeasurable scientific significance. As you know, NASA had planned to terminate Hubble's work in 2010. With the premature cancellation of the final Hubble repair mission, the telescope will become inoperative several years before that time. The next-generation Webb telescope will not be launched until at least 2010, and the gap created between the operation of these two telescopes will rob scientists of several years of invaluable data.

According to press reports, \$200 million has already been spent to prepare new state-of-the-art instrumentation for the fifth and final repair mission. Furthermore, reports have also indicated that it may cost more than \$300 million for a mission to bring Hubble safely back to Earth. In light of these costs, which total approximately a half-billion dollars, as well as the several decades of funding already devoted to Hubble, a decision to cancel the Hubble program several years shy of its goal appears to make little economic sense.

We must ensure that our manned space missions are conducted as safely as possible as NASA moves ahead with future Shuttle missions. We are keenly aware of this need as we approach the one-year anniversary of the loss of *Columbia*. However, we must also ensure that we have exhausted every safe option to allow Hubble to continue its exploration before allowing for its early demise.

The scientific returns we have received from Hubble's service thus far have exceeded our expectations. Given the President's recent pronouncement of a vision to rededicate the Nation's commitment to space exploration, we believe that NASA should make every possible effort to retain this proven window on the universe.

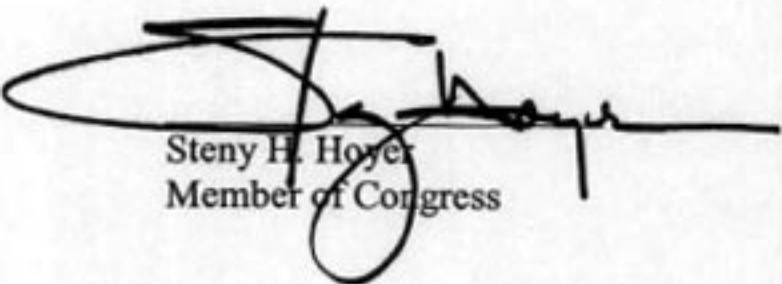
Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski  
United States Senator



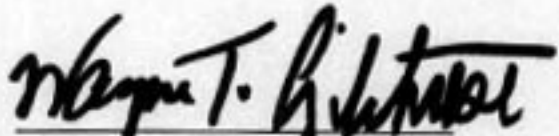
Paul S. Sarbanes  
United States Senator



Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress



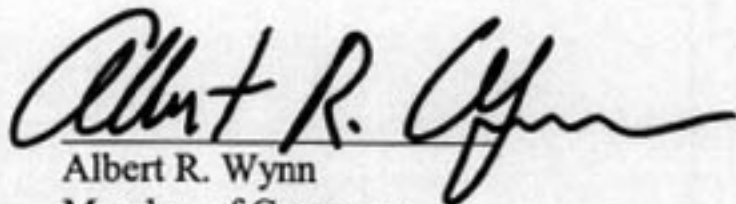
Benjamin L. Cardin  
Member of Congress



Wayne T. Gilchrest  
Member of Congress



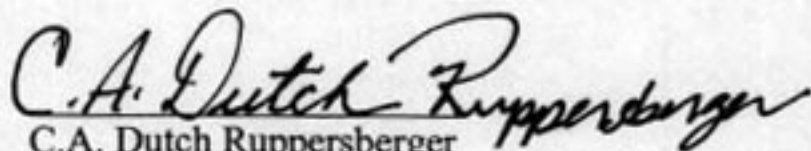
Roscoe G. Bartlett  
Member of Congress



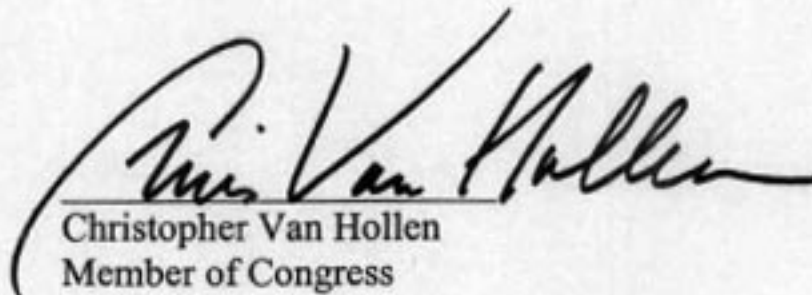
Albert R. Wynn  
Member of Congress



Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress



Christopher Van Hollen  
Member of Congress