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January 21, 2004

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


Dear Administrator O'Keefe:

I was shocked and surprised by your recent decision to terminate the next scheduled servicing mission of the Hubble Space Telescope (HST). I fully appreciate and support your emphasis on astronaut safety. Astronaut safety is my number one priority. However, given Hubble's extraordinary contributions to science, exploration and discovery, I ask you to reconsider your decision and appoint an independent panel of outside experts to fully review and assess all of the issues surrounding another Hubble servicing mission.

This panel should report its findings to you and the relevant committees in both houses of Congress this year so we can understand fully the risks, costs and benefits of another Hubble servicing mission. In addition, I request that all planning, preparation and astronaut training activities continue without interruption until Congress has reviewed and decided this issue. Should this panel confirm the need, value and safety of another servicing mission, it is critical that time not be lost. Given Hubble's extraordinary contributions to science, exploration and discovery and its value to the nation and the world, a decision to terminate the next servicing mission must not be made without a thorough, rigorous and comprehensive analysis.

Hubble has become the most successful NASA program since Apollo. It can not be terminated prematurely with the stroke of a pen without a thorough and rigorous review while planning, preparation and training activities continue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on VA/HUD  
And Independent Agencies