

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 30, 2016

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

The Honorable Deborah Lee James
Secretary, United States Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

The Honorable Charles Bolden
Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Administrator Huerta, Secretary James, and Administrator Bolden,

We write to express our strong support for the collective work of your organizations in facilitating the development of a robust, domestic commercial space launch industry, in order to establish fair and level competition in the National Security Space and Civil Space launch markets, and ensuring the safety of the public and the safe delivery of our nation's critical scientific and military payloads to orbit.

The recent mishap involving a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket during a pre-launch ground test in advance of a commercial mission from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station is a reminder of the challenging nature of spaceflight. Fortunately, due to strong safety procedures and established regulatory processes, the mishap resulted in no loss of life, no injuries, and no damages to third party property.

We recognize that the space business is technologically challenging. Given these challenges, Congress many years ago passed bipartisan legislation governing the issuance of launch and reentry licenses for commercial spaceflight activities by the Secretary of Transportation. Accordingly, the FAA has established regulations that govern licensing as well as mishap and accident investigations. Consistent with regulations, the Falcon 9 anomaly has been properly classified as a "mishap" under federal law and is being resolved under applicable regulatory procedures.

We are pleased that FAA is maintaining a strong and prudent oversight role that appropriately draws upon private sector insight in ensuring a robust investigative process and safe return to flight for SpaceX. We encourage FAA to continue to leverage its considerable investigative expertise to help SpaceX come to resolution swiftly and safely, and we urge FAA to continue implementing its role in accordance with applicable federal law.

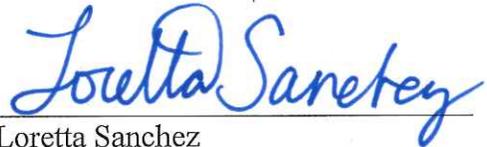
Further, we understand that the Air Force and NASA, as well as their federally-funded technical advisors, are actively participating in the Accident Investigation Team at the request of SpaceX, as well as pursuing parallel reviews. We applaud this approach as consistent with long-standing accident investigation procedures and post-anomaly return-to-flight processes internal to Air Force and NASA regulations. We are confident that current NASA and Air Force procedures will ensure that future U.S. Government missions that utilize the Falcon 9, and any other launch vehicle system, will undergo appropriate flight worthiness evaluations prior to flight.

Accidents are unfortunate events, and accident investigations should not be politicized. We encourage you to reject calls for your organizations to abandon established, well-considered, and long-standing procedures.

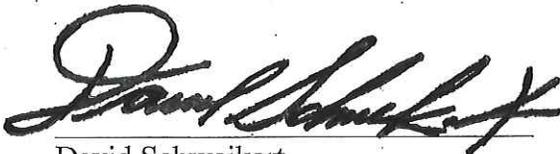
Sincerely,



Bill Flores
Member of Congress



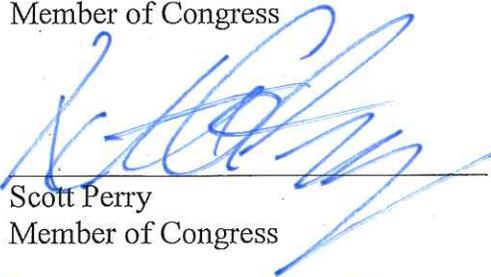
Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress



Scott Perry
Member of Congress



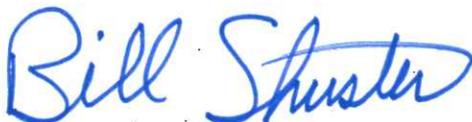
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress



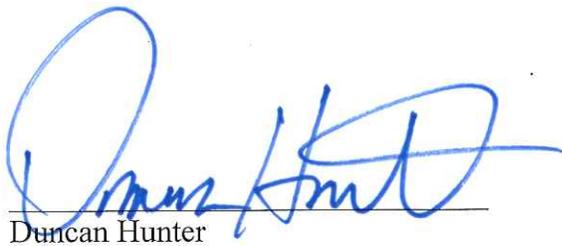
André Carson
Member of Congress



Bill Shuster
Member of Congress



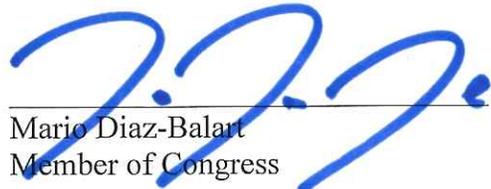
Steve Israel
Member of Congress



Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress



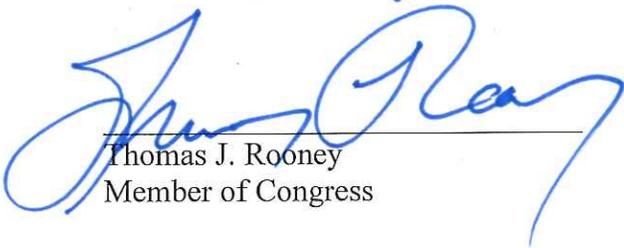
Filemon Vela
Member of Congress



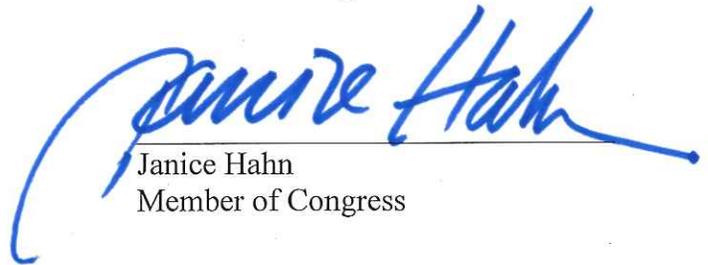
Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



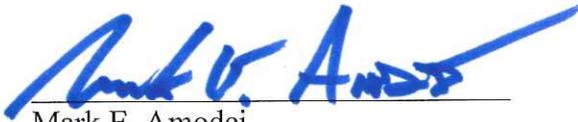
Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress



Thomas J. Rooney
Member of Congress



Janice Hahn
Member of Congress



Mark E. Amodei
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross
Member of Congress



Scott Peters
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress