

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2011

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake a review of the policies and practices of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) and the Smithsonian's disposition of the shuttle program related property.

The National Aeronautics and Space Authorization Act of 2010 (Public Law No: 111-267) reiterated Congressional support for the existing NASA disposal plan. Section 603 of the Act states, "The orbiter vehicles shall be made available and located for display and maintenance through a competitive procedure established pursuant to the disposition plan developed under section 613(a) of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2008."

The law regarding disposal of excess government property is clear, and NASA's disposition plan for the shuttle clearly affirms that NASA will follow it. NASA is bound to follow existing federal property disposal laws, including the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act. That law indicates that if the Space Shuttle Orbiters are declared surplus to NASA's needs, they need to be offered to other Federal agencies (including the Defense Department) before they can be offered to any organization outside the federal government.

While answering questions before the Senate and House Appropriations Commerce, Science, and Justice and Related Agencies Subcommittees, NASA Administrator Bolden stated that the decision on shuttle disposition was his alone based on the process he and his predecessors laid out – including a ten point selection criteria analyzed by a "team" within the organization. Any such GAO review should disclose the 10 criteria, the members of the team, and how the final decision was determined.

Specifically, we ask that GAO review how the disposition of the shuttle program related property carried out, and if NASA and the Smithsonian did so in accordance with all statutory and regulatory guidelines.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Steve Austria
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress



Steven C. LaTourette
Member of Congress