

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 9, 2011

Paul K. Martin  
Inspector General  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
300 E Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20546-0001

Dear Mr. Martin:

Thank you for your commitment and diligence on behalf of NASA and the United States. I appreciate your response to my request for an investigation into NASA's Selection of Display Locations for the Space Shuttle Orbiters with your August 25, 2011 report (the "Report"). I have a number of follow up questions and concerns, several of which stem from developments since the Report was issued.

- 1. Consistency with statutory obligations:** Public Law 111-267, provides that "[t]he Smithsonian Institution, which, as of the date of enactment of this Act, houses the Space Shuttle Enterprise, shall determine any new location for the Enterprise." Despite the clear statutory authority, the Report does not detail the Smithsonian's role in this process. In fact, your report states that "[a]ccording to Bolden, he chose these locations." Therefore, it appears that the NASA Administrator rather than the Smithsonian, determined the location for the Space Shuttles, including the Enterprise. Given the clear intention of Congress, did the Administrator have the legal authority to make this decision? What role, if any, did the Smithsonian play in determining the location for the Enterprise? Further, the Report states that "In exchange for receiving a flown Orbiter, the Smithsonian returned the title to Enterprise to NASA on April 7, 2011". Did the Smithsonian abdicate its statutory responsibility to determine the location of the Enterprise?
- 2. Access for International visitors:** According to the Report, a key criterion for locating the Space Shuttle was the ability for international visitors to access the site. However, it seems that NASA's estimations of international visitors only took into account ports of entry while failing to take into account international visitors that could drive to Space Shuttle locations. While NASA used Department of Commerce data to determine the number of international visitors, I am concerned that this data fails to capture the number of Canadian visitors who may visit a site. Specifically, while the Commerce Department data estimates international visitors to non-port cities, it bases these estimations on a voluntary survey of approximately 0.3 percent of all incoming international visitors – mainly those who arrive by air. Given the sample size, these estimations must

have a large margin of error. More importantly, this sample set is biased against Canadian tourists, the majority of whom do not arrive by air. Most notably, the Province of Ontario is home to more than 13 million people the majority of whom live within driving distance of Ohio. Did NASA's estimations of international visitors take into account international visitors from Canada who could drive to Space Shuttle locations? If not, why not?

- 3. Definition of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA):** I am also concerned with NASA's definition of a region – a term clearly defined by the Department of Commerce. For Example, the Kennedy Space Center's (KSC) region of Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville has 536,357 people, ranking KSC a "0" per NASA's population scoring system – yet KSC was awarded a "5". The only way that would be possible is if Orlando was included in KSC's population configuration. However, Orlando is 47 miles away from KSC, and is not part of the U.S. Census Bureau-defined region for KSC. Please explain this discrepancy. How did NASA determine the final population categories and regions?

If NASA – as it appears to have done with KSC – includes cities outside of an specific MSA, the Dayton region and surrounding MSAs (a region similar in size to the one including both KSC and Orlando) have more than 5 million residents, yet received the same score as another applicant - Tulsa, Oklahoma – when the entire state of Oklahoma has less than 4 million people. Did NASA correctly capture the weighted values for population?

- 4. Concerns about the revised population scoring system:** I am also concerned that NASA did not properly carry out its revised population scoring system. This system changed three times before a final decision was made. The final criteria (Over 8 million = 10 points; 800,000 to 8 million = 5 points; Less than 800,000 = 0) appears to be skewed heavily in favor of a few major metropolitan areas. Is it reasonable to use a scoring system that would qualify 3 MSAs for the highest category, while relegating 63 MSAs to the second category?

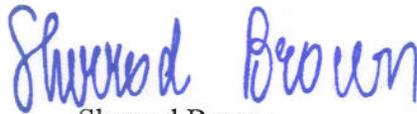
The original scoring matrix had four categories. If NASA had used this system, Dayton would have been in the second-to-highest size category. However, the final scoring matrix ensured that only three MSAs were large enough to qualify for 10 points and the 5 point category would include cities in a wide range of sizes - cities that ranged from huge metropolitan areas such as Dallas-Fort Worth (6,447,615 residents in 2009) to smaller cities such as Worcester, MA (803,701 residents in 2009). Why was the original population scoring system changed? Was it weighted to favor the nation's three largest cities?

- 5. Fundamental changes to winning bids:** Finally, the Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum – the museum designated to receive the Enterprise – recently announced major changes to its bid. Not only will the Intrepid no longer house the Enterprise, but it plans to move the Enterprise to an area zoned for manufacturing in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan. These major

changes will require the museum to raise tens of millions of dollars. This appears to be a blatant attempt to circumvent the entire Space Shuttle disposition process, since this new bid is an entirely new proposal. I am concerned that the integrity of the entire Space Shuttle disposition process is suspect when winning bidders are able to present an entirely new proposal a few months after NASA's decision has been made. I ask that you review this new proposal, determine how it compares to other prior applicants, and provide your recommendations as to how NASA should treat what is essentially an entirely new bid that was never subject to competition.

I ask that you consider further review of the Space Shuttle disposition decision in light of these concerns and other new developments. Again, thank you for your service to NASA and our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator