Message from Rick Anthes  
March 24, 2005

Dear Colleagues:

As you are all well aware, the country faces many fiscal challenges for FY06 because of the tightest federal budget in years. In the opinion of many of our colleagues, the situation at NASA poses one of the most formidable threats to continued support for a balanced scientific research program that is vital to the nation’s health and security. The overall NASA budget in the President’s request for FY06 may look reasonably healthy, but it is being reallocated within the agency because of changing priorities in ways that might fundamentally reduce scientific capabilities in areas of critical importance, including Earth sciences. Protecting NASA’s historical commitment to a balanced science agenda should be one of our community’s highest priorities this year, and I will be asking you to join me in several advocacy efforts regarding NASA during the course of the FY06 budget and legislative process.

As a first step, I believe that the upcoming confirmation hearings of Michael Griffin, President Bush’s nominee to become the new NASA administrator, present a tremendous opportunity for our community to raise critical questions about the science base at NASA. The issue is not Dr. Griffin’s qualifications for the position – he is extremely well qualified. The issue is maintaining and strengthening NASA’s unique role in supporting and carrying out science that is of vital importance to society.

I ask that all of you take a few minutes of your time to register your concerns about the importance of NASA’s science programs with the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee – the committee that will eventually vote to confirm Dr. Griffin. Please write your Senators (a sample letter is provided below) and ask that they contact the members of the committee before the hearing, which should be scheduled very soon. If one of your Senators is on the committee (the membership list follows the sample letter), please alter the sample letter below to make the plea directly to that Member. So that we know what the response is to this alert, please e-mail Laura Curtis (lcurtis@ucar.edu) with a copy of your letter. Please FAX your letter to your senators. Fax numbers are on the OGA website at: http://www.ucar.edu/oga/html/links/108th_congress.html (this reflects the new 109th Congress). Contact Laura if you need assistance.

Thank you in advance for participating in this action alert. I hope that the atmospheric sciences community’s activity on this issue is timely and effective. Much is at stake. The time it takes will be well worth it if we can make some headway in protecting the invaluable science that NASA provides this nation.

Best regards -- Rick Anthes, President of UCAR
Dear Senator XXXXXXX:

As one of your constituents and as a scientist on the faculty of XXXXXX, I ask that you become involved in a critical issue regarding the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) that has the potential to slow this nation’s scientific progress and eventually threaten our standing as the world’s most knowledgeable and prosperous country. While it is true that the NASA budget increases by 2.4 percent in the President’s FY06 Request, that increase and additional funding from existing programs that are proposed to be cut or eliminated, will all support the Administration’s Moon/Mars Initiative. Funding for critical science programs is down in the President’s Request and many valuable unmanned missions that provide critical scientific information about our own planet and space are proposed to be postponed or terminated.

A hearing will soon be held by the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee regarding the confirmation of Michael Griffin as NASA Administrator. Dr. Griffin’s qualifications are not an issue, but the very future of NASA as a critical contributor to scientific research of importance to the nation is very much at stake. It is imperative that Congress make clear to Dr. Griffin that he is about to be put in charge of some of the world’s most valuable scientific resources and to question him about how he plans to support them as the Administration’s plans for the Moon/Mars Initiative move forward in a very tight budget environment.

I urge you to contact your colleagues on the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee to request that a number of issues be covered during the confirmation questioning of Dr. Griffin. These issues include:

- The protection of NASA’s Earth science programs that provide major societal benefits to the country including improved weather forecasts and warnings; climate outlooks; management of natural resources including water, agriculture, and energy; and mitigation of natural disasters such as drought, floods, landslides, and volcanoes.

- The continued development of the Global Earth Observing System of Systems (GEOSS) and the Climate Change Science Program (CCSP), both of which are priorities of the Administration.

- The separation of appropriation accounts (a system in place until this year) so that likely Moon/Mars cost overruns do not undermine NASA science programs.
• The protection of the agency’s unmanned space science programs that provide information about space weather, solar radiation storms that affect communications and the lives of astronauts, the atmosphere of other planets – all of which will be of great value as the Moon/Mars Mission is developed.

• Justification for the elimination or indefinite deferment of many smaller, incredibly productive missions such as Voyager, two spacecraft that were launched in 1977 that are still producing previously unknown data about our solar system. Many productive missions contributing important information to Earth and space science may be prematurely terminated, with relatively low savings, if current plans proceed. Major prior national investments in functional and productive space assets should be protected.

• Protection of this country’s remote sensing capabilities for the collection of information about the Earth’s atmosphere, oceans, land and ice surfaces, biosphere, and space.

Thank you very much for your attention to this critical request. We must not stand by quietly while this country’s unique scientific capabilities are diminished.

Sincerely,

List of Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee members

Ted Stevens - Alaska
Hart 522, fax: 202-224-2354

John McCain - Arizona
Russell 241, fax: 202-228-2862

Conrad Burns - Montana
Dirksen 187, fax: 202-224-8594

Trent Lott - Mississippi
Russell 487, fax: 202-224-2262

Kay Bailey Hutchison - Texas
Russell 284, fax: 202-224-0776

Olympia Snowe - Maine
Russell 154, fax: 202-224-1946

Gordon Smith - Oregon
Russell 404, fax: 202-228-3997
John Ensign - Nevada  
Russell 364, fax: 202-228-2193

George Allen - Virginia  
Russell 204, fax: 202-224-5432

John Sununu - New Hampshire  
Russell 111, fax: 202-228-4131

Jim DeMint - South Carolina  
Hart 825, fax: 202-228-5143

David Vitter - Louisiana  
Hart 825A, fax: 202-228-5061

Daniel K. Inouye - Hawaii  
Hart 722, fax: 202-224-6747

John D. Rockefeller IV - WV  
Hart 531, fax: 202-224-7665

John F. Kerry - Massachusetts  
Russell 304, fax: 202-224-8525

Byron L. Dorgan - North Dakota  
Hart 322, fax: 202-224-1193

Barbara Boxer - California  
Hart 112, fax: 415-956-6701

Bill Nelson - Florida  
Hart 716, fax: 202-228-2183

Maria Cantwell - Washington  
Hart 717, fax: 202-228-0514

Frank Lautenberg - New Jersey  
Hart 324, fax: 202-228-4054

E. Benjamin Nelson - Nebraska  
Hart 720, fax: 202-228-0012

Mark Pryor - Arkansas  
Russell 217, fax: 202-228-0908