

August 23, 1967

The Hon. Thomas Kuchel
United States Senator
Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator:

I am writing to beg you to give your personal attention to the action of the Senate appropriations committee on the NASA budget this year. I am not going to quarrel with the painful conclusion that very sharp economies may be necessary. However, I feel that it is very deeply against the national interest to apply necessary cuts to the scientific and long-range parts of the national space program, while leaving intact the segments allocated to Apollo. Apollo does represent a very important commitment, but under the present circumstances the utilitarian and scientific exploration of space is suffering very badly by their very connection in the same agency with the lunar landing mission. For in order to represent a respectable cut in the total budget, these programs are being virtually wiped out if we accept the present conclusions of the House appropriations committee.

I therefore appeal to you not so much for a restoration of the funds, although we would hope for the kind of times which would permit this to happen, but for the prescription that if there are to be such savage cuts in the space program, we should reconsider the desirability of adhering to the Apollo commitment in the face of these unnecessary economies. The Space Authorization Acts did still leave some leeway for the eventual resuscitation of a balanced program. These further cuts at the appropriation level will be scientifically and technically ruinous unless some accommodation is possible. Since this may be a politically sensitive area, it might be difficult for your committee to assume the final responsibility for a reorientation of the whole program. But in that event it could at least give the Executive branch authority to reprogram its various component activities in such a way as to obtain the maximum utility from whatever funds Congress feels able to appropriate. This could then leave some time for some further debate as to the national intention about sticking to the Apollo schedule at all costs.

Your consideration of this is very much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

KUCHEL