

## Challenger Center Supports NASA's Education Budget

Statement for Hearing of the Science and Space Subcommittee  
of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

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Challenger Center for Space Science Education fully supports NASA's expanded educational activities, as embodied in the proposed 2011 budget.

After a few years in which education had a less important role, NASA's leadership has put education back into a level one priority. Education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is essential not just for NASA's future, but for our nation. NASA has a unique power to excite and educate students and NASA's proposed budget embraces this essential role in education and in our society.

Challenger Center for Space Science Education was established 25 years ago by Congressional authorization, in the wake of the Challenger space shuttle tragedy. Over these years, it has established a national network of 47 Challenger Learning Centers, taking students on simulated space missions. These highly engaging experiences reach 400,000 students every year. As the space shuttle era winds down, Challenger's mission couldn't be more important, as a way to sustain student and public interest in space exploration, and in the broader STEM domains.

"No matter what pathway our nation chooses for space exploration, we will need an engaged, motivated and educated workforce." said Daniel Barstow, President of the Challenger Center. "NASA's missions of exploration and discovery strike a deep chord in our nation's soul. This is especially true for young people, who need to envision themselves as participants in this grand adventure, whether as engineers, astronauts, scientists or simply as engaged and enthralled citizens."

NASA's education budget includes a strong combination of national programs, such as the new Summer of Innovation initiative, along with educational outreach embedded into NASA's diverse Earth, space and aerospace programs. Challenger Center especially supports the expanded use of International Space Station and the multi-faceted Earth observation programs as ways to engage young people in understanding and stewarding our home planet. These programs also have strong tie-ins with broader national goals of developing technologies for wind, solar and other alternative energies – thus making the connection between space exploration and other STEM fields.

"The contributions, and sacrifices, of the NASA family over the past half century live on – and they must be passed on. But you need a vibrant, active space program, and its educational outreach, in place in order for that to be possible." said June Scobee Rodgers, Founder of Challenger Center.

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