

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HM 253 Space Shuttle Orbiter Retirement

SPONSOR(S): Workman and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SM 944

	REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1)	Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council		Wintering	Tinker
2)	Rules & Calendar Council			
3)	Policy Council			
4)				
5)				

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

America's Space Shuttle program is winding down a 40-year mission to broaden human research and exploration in outer space. The last flight of a Space Shuttle orbiter is scheduled for September 2010, to transport supplies to the International Space Station (ISS).

NASA already has announced plans to preserve the orbiters and thousands of other "artifacts" of the Space Shuttle program. It has been soliciting proposals from museums, public entities, and eligible non-profit organizations interested in showcasing them. The orbiters are getting the most attention. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has been promised one of the orbiters, and competition is growing among the states for the other two. The Visitor's Center at Kennedy Space Center (KSC), operated by Delaware North, is among a number of entities nationwide submitting proposals for an orbiter.

There will be costs associated with winning the competition to display an orbiter. NASA will charge \$28.8 million to prepare each orbiter for display and to transport it to its final destination. Additionally, most, if not all, of the museums and other venues bidding for an orbiter will have to make substantial improvements to their facilities, or even build new facilities, to exhibit an orbiter. However, Delaware North's proposal to obtain an orbiter for KSC will not in any way obligate state funding towards obtaining an orbiter or for KSC improvements to host an orbiter.

House Memorial 253 requests that the U.S. Congress direct one of the decommissioned Space Shuttle orbiters be preserved and placed on permanent display at KSC.

HOUSE PRINCIPLES

Members are encouraged to evaluate proposed legislation in light of the following guiding principles of the House of Representatives

- Balance the state budget.
- Create a legal and regulatory environment that fosters economic growth and job creation.
- Lower the tax burden on families and businesses.
- Reverse or restrain the growth of government.
- Promote public safety.
- Promote educational accountability, excellence, and choice.
- Foster respect for the family and for innocent human life.
- Protect Florida's natural beauty.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

As successor to the Apollo program, the Space Shuttle program¹ is focused on carrying various payloads into lower earth orbit, ferrying crew and supplies to the International Space Station (ISS), and servicing or repairing the Hubble Space Telescope² and other infrastructure. The Space Shuttle orbiters were the first U.S. spacecraft built to be reused, and to return to Earth horizontally. Five orbiters capable of space flight were built: Atlantis, Challenger, Columbia, Discovery, and Endeavor; a sixth, Enterprise, was built for suborbital test flights.³

The first Space Shuttle orbiter to launch into lower earth orbit was Columbia, on April 12, 1981. The final flight is scheduled for September 16, 2010, to be made by Discovery to ferry more equipment to the ISS. All 130 launches of orbiters into space have occurred at the Kennedy Space Center (KSC).⁴

The Space Shuttle program's retirement date of 2010 was announced many years ago. But since at least 2005, there has been discussion about delaying that retirement date because the Space Shuttle program's successor, Constellation, has experienced cost and timing problems. Last month, the Obama Administration announced plans to eliminate the Constellation program and instead contract with commercial space launch companies to continue space research, transportation, and exploration activities. This plan is the subject of current debate in Congress.

Meanwhile, NASA is proceeding with plans to make the Space Shuttle orbiters and other program artifacts available to state and local governments, educational institutions, museums, and other eligible non-profit organizations, as authorized by Congress in 2008.⁵ It has created a website with information about the "Space Shuttle Transition"⁶ and a separate website⁷ where eligible entities can "bid" on

¹ More information available at http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/main/index.html.

² More information available at <http://hubblesite.org>. Last visited March 31, 2010.

³ Supra FN 1. The Enterprise is on display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's annex at Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_space_shuttle_missions.

⁵ Section 613 of P.L. 110-422. Available at <http://legislative.nasa.gov/PL%20110-422.pdf>.

⁶ More information available at http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/transition/home/index.html. Last visited March 31, 2010.

⁷ See <http://gsaccess.gov/NASAWel.htm>. Last visited March 31, 2010.

specific items, from tools to space suits, with the highest bidders winning the right to publicly display these artifacts. NASA will begin distributing the artifacts next year.

The deadline for proposals for obtaining one of the remaining orbiters was February 19, 2010. The exact number of proposals received has not been announced, but various media accounts indicate that at least 21 proposals were submitted. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has been promised the Discovery orbiter. Next spring, NASA is expected to announce the two institutions chosen to display the Atlantis and the Endeavor. Delaware North, which operates the KSC, made a timely proposal.

NASA will charge the Smithsonian and the other two institutions \$28.8 million each, payable in full by April 11, 2011, for the orbiters. Of that amount, \$20.5 million is the estimated cost to clean and otherwise prepare an orbiter for display, and \$8.3 million is the cost to transport it to its new home, by December 2011.

Several institutions, including the Smithsonian, the U.S. Air Force Museum in Ohio, and Space Center Houston, already have begun fund-raising efforts to pay for NASA's orbiter preparation and delivery costs and to expand or build facilities to house an orbiter. Delaware North's proposal to obtain an orbiter for KSC will not in any way obligate state funding towards obtaining an orbiter or for KSC improvements to host an orbiter.

Effect of Proposed Changes

HM 253 expresses the Legislature's request that the U.S. Congress direct one of the retired Space Shuttle orbiters be preserved and placed on permanent display at KSC.

In making that request, HM 253 notes that:

- KSC has launched all Space Shuttle orbiters since the first one in 1981;
- In FY 2008, the Space Shuttle program was responsible for approximately 15 percent of KSC's budget allocation; and
- More than 40,000 jobs in Florida can be attributed to KSC's operations, an indication that, in addition to its historical importance, the Space Shuttle program has been significant economically to Floridians.

Copies of the memorial, if approved by the Legislature and the Governor, will be distributed to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and to each member of Florida's Congressional delegation.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Not applicable.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. This bill does not appear to affect county or municipal government.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES