December 20, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As leaders in the nation's aerospace and aeronautics community, we strongly urge you to consider the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of the U.S. Aerospace Industry and identify aerospace and aviation as a national priority in your “State of the Union” address. After a year of deliberations, the Commission has concluded that “if the United States is to maintain global aerospace leadership in the 21st century, it is imperative that aerospace become a national priority.”

The Commission’s final report stresses the critical importance of aerospace to U.S. efforts for combating terrorism and other security challenges stating, “For the first time in U.S. history, aerospace companies must succeed commercially to remain viable. If they do not, the nation could lose its defense industrial base. If we allow our aerospace industry to falter, our nation’s defense hangs in the balance.” The Commission further states “Government policies and investments in long-term research have not kept pace with a changing world” and “recommends that the federal government significantly increase its investment in basic aerospace research, which enhances U.S. national security, enables breakthrough capabilities, and fosters an efficient, secure and safe aerospace transportation system.”

Earlier this year, the Commission released a statistical analysis called the “U.S. Aerospace and Aviation Industry: A State-by-State Analysis.” The report shows that the U.S. aerospace and the air transportation industry has a major economic and employment impact in all 50 states and is a major force of civil, military and space manufacturing and air operations in nearly half of the nation’s states. Upon the release of the report, Honorable Robert S. Walker, Commission Chair and transition team senior advisor on science, space and technology, stated, “A strong aerospace [and aviation] industry is essential to enable the U.S. to defend itself, compete in the marketplace, maintain a highly skilled workforce, and provide all Americans with the ability to travel safely and securely anywhere in the world.”

As we approach the centennial of the Wright Brothers’ first flight, it is more important than ever that America renew its national commitment to leadership in aviation. We urge you to establish a national aerospace policy and to promote aerospace and aviation by creating a government-
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wide management structure to develop a new 21st Century air transportation system for the nation, and through investments in research, reestablish U.S. preeminence in aerospace and aeronautics. Implicit in this action would be the designation of a single senior individual empowered by you, as the President, to lead this vital effort.

We look forward to working with you to ensure this important investment in America's future.

Sincerely,

[Signatures]

President
American Society of Mechanical Engineers

President
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

President
Aerospace Industries Association

President
Aircraft Electronics Association

President
Airline Dispatchers Federation

President
American Association of Engineering Societies

President
American Astronautical Society

President
American Helicopter Society
President
American Society of Civil Engineers

President
Aviation Distributors and Manufacturers Association

President
General Aviation Manufacturers Association

President
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers-USA

President
NASA Aeronautics Support Team

President
NASA Alumni League

President
Navy League of the United States

cc: Vice President Richard Cheney
The Honorable John Marburger, III, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
The Honorable Sean O’Keefe, Administrator, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary of Transportation, Department of Transportation
The Honorable Marion C Blakey, Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration
The Honorable Donald H. Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense
The Honorable Robert C. Byrd, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable C.W. Young, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings, Chairman, Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Cmte.
The Honorable Sherwood Boehlert, Chairman, House Science Committee
The Honorable Don Young, Chairman, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
The Honorable Carl Levin, Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee
The Honorable Bob Stump, Chairman, House Armed Services Committee