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Distinguished Former NASA Astronauts Endorse Commercial Human Spaceflight in *Wall Street Journal* Op-Ed

Washington, D.C., October 16, 2009 – Commercial human spaceflight received a strong endorsement today by a group of thirteen former NASA astronauts who published an opinion piece titled “Commercial Spaceflight: All Systems Go” in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Astronauts Buzz Aldrin, Ken Bowersox, Jake Garn, Robert Gibson, Hank Hartsfield, John Herrington, John Lounge, Rick Searfoss, Norman Thagard, Kathryn Thornton, Jim Voss and Charles Walker stated, “We strongly agree with the Augustine Committee’s endorsement of commercial human spaceflight, and we encourage the White House and Congress to embrace this positive vision for our nation’s future in space.”

The thirteen astronauts have collectively flown a total of 42 space missions and logged a total of 2 years and 48 days in space aboard six different space vehicles including Gemini, Apollo, Space Shuttle, Soyuz, Mir, and the International Space Station. The group included the following excerpts in their op-ed:

- “We believe that the commercial sector is fully capable of safely handling the critical task of low-Earth-orbit human transportation.”
- “NASA should put its unique resources into pushing back the final frontier and not in repaving the earth-to-orbit road it cleared a half century ago.”
- “We are fully confident that the commercial spaceflight sector can provide a level of safety equal to that offered by the venerable Russian Soyuz system, which has flown safely for the last 38 years, and exceeding that of the Space Shuttle.”
- “We enthusiastically endorse this robust vision for the future of human spaceflight— a vision in which NASA is free to concentrate on the challenges of exploration beyond low Earth orbit while private commerce enables increased activity in Earth orbit.”

Following the publication of the astronaut op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, the Commercial Spaceflight Federation welcomed today’s show of support by the community of former NASA astronauts. Bretton Alexander, President of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation, stated, “As the nation’s policymakers consider the future path of our space program, the commercial spaceflight sector is honored to receive today’s strong endorsement by these distinguished former NASA astronauts. We agree with these astronauts that a robust commercially procured crew capability will help enable our nation’s space program to reach new heights.”

The full text of the astronaut op-ed can be found on the *Wall Street Journal* website at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107204574475091646686368.html>.

About the Commercial Spaceflight Federation

The mission of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation (CSF) is to promote the development of commercial human spaceflight, pursue ever higher levels of safety, and share best practices and expertise throughout the industry. CSF member organizations include commercial spaceflight developers, operators, and spaceports. The Commercial Spaceflight Federation is governed by a board of directors, composed of the member companies' CEO-level officers and entrepreneurs. For more information please visit www.commercialspaceflight.org or contact Executive Director John Gedmark at john@commercialspaceflight.org or at 202.349.1121.

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