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Commercial Spaceflight Federation Welcomes Historic NASA Commitment of $75 Million for Commercial Suborbital Flights, Payloads

First-of-its-kind NASA program will benefit science and education, stimulate commercial spaceflight

Washington, D.C., February 18, 2010 – The Commercial Spaceflight Federation enthusiastically welcomes NASA's announcement today that NASA will fund dozens of science and education payloads to fly on commercial suborbital vehicles built by companies including Armadillo Aerospace, Blue Origin, Masten Space Systems, Virgin Galactic, and XCOR Aerospace. At the first annual Next-Generation Suborbital Researchers Conference, NASA Deputy Administrator Lori Garver announced in her keynote speech today that President Obama's Fiscal Year 2011 budget request for NASA commits $75 million in funding over five years for the new Commercial Reusable Suborbital Research program (CRuSR).

"We are thrilled to see NASA recognizing the enormous potential of new commercial vehicles for science, research, and education," said Mark Sirangelo, Chairman of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation. "NASA Deputy Administrator Garver's announcement today means that hundreds of scientists, educators, and students will be able to fly payloads on these new commercial vehicles."

"For the first time ever, NASA has put forward a commitment to dramatically expand the number of research and education payloads that fly into space," said Dr. S. Alan Stern, chair of the Commercial Spaceflight Federation's Suborbital Applications Researchers Group (SARG) and former NASA associate administrator for science. "Since this new generation of commercial vehicles are low cost, NASA's $75 million will open the floodgates for everyone from astronomers to high school classrooms to conduct real science in space. This will be one of the best investments NASA has ever made."

"For everyone who has dreamed of participating in the grand adventure of spaceflight, this $75 million commitment marks the dawn of a new space age," added Stern. "As the commercial space industry continues to grow, I expect that we will see increasing numbers of payloads and people flying to space."

"I am pleased to see NASA's recognition of the transformative potential of these new commercial vehicles," stated Dr. Fred Tarantino, President and CEO of the Universities Space Research Association. "The space science community is thrilled to see such a commitment to low-cost, reusable, and frequent access to space that will provide hands-on experience for students and change the way many space scientists operate."

NASA is proposing to spend $15 million in each of five years from 2011-2015 for the CRuSR program, funds that will both go to universities and other research institutions to build science and education payloads, as well as being used to purchase flights on commercial suborbital vehicles. The CRuSR program is based at NASA's Ames Research Center in the heart of Silicon Valley.

The Next-Generation Suborbital Researchers Conference, a first-of-its-kind forum for bringing together scientists, educators, and vehicle developers to discuss potential research and education uses for commercial spacecraft, is being held in Boulder, Colorado and is co-organized by the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), the Universities Space Research Association (USRA), and the Commercial Spaceflight Federation (CSF).

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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