

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

March 11, 2004

Hon. Sean O'Keefe
Administrator
National Aeronautic and Space Administration
300 C St., SW
Washington DC 20546

Dear Administrator O'Keefe:

I am troubled that after what I felt was a very constructive hearing, you have made statements to the press that seem to undercut the progress we made today.

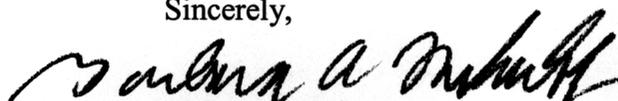
At this morning's hearing you agreed to our request for an independent study by the National Academy Sciences to examine the risks and value of Hubble as well as service life extension and alternative servicing options. The Subcommittee was very clear that the purpose of this study is to gather the best information from the experts to determine Hubble's future. Yet, I understand that you later said that nothing would change your decision to cancel the final servicing mission.

This decision must not be made arbitrarily by one person at NASA or one person in Congress. The scientific community, engineering community, astronauts, and many members of Congress – of both parties, in both houses – have grave concerns about the path you are taking. Asking for more information is not an academic exercise. I am not prejudging the outcome, and you must not either.

Given the great importance of Hubble to science and the seriousness of return to flight issues, we owe it to the world and our astronauts to get the best research and make a prudent decision based on that analysis. Prudence also dictates that planning continue until the National Academy of Sciences completes its study. NASA must not lose time or talent while we look at this issue.

Know that should you disregard these concerns, I will do everything that I can as a member of the Appropriations Committee to make sure that this year's NASA budget provides adequate funding to continue planning and preparation activities related to Hubble until the studies are complete and an informed decision can be made.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski
U. S. Senate