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As Space Shuttle Discovery Gets Ready for Lift Off, Ruppersberger Calls for New Space Strategy

Discovery is Fueled up for Final Flight Scheduled for this Afternoon

(Washington, DC) – As the Space Shuttle Discovery prepares for its final flight this afternoon in Florida, **Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)** is calling for a new American strategy for space. President Obama announced last year he is cancelling Constellation, the plan to return astronauts to the moon by 2020. This move jeopardizes an \$11.5 billion investment, puts thousands of skilled scientists out of work, and shakes the very heart of the space industrial base. At the same time, China and Russia are nipping at our heels. China is pumping money into its space plan, subsidizing private investments in space technology and setting its sights on a moon landing by 2020.

“Constellation wasn’t perfect, but we must not give up on our quest to return to the moon, Mars and beyond. America needs a new plan to reinvigorate our space industry, get our young people excited about space and other sciences, and inspire people of all ages to dream about reaching for the stars. We must commit to a robust program run by NASA in partnership with private companies,” said Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger, Ranking Member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence that oversees the technical aspects of space.

Improving America’s space industry, both manned vehicles and satellites, will also boost America’s national security. Satellites keep us safe. We use satellites and their images to track suspected terrorists around the world and stop future attacks. Satellites provide real-time data to our troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan and allow us to monitor important global developments.

Back here at home, we use satellites to operate the GPS system in our cars or make a cell phone call. When you buy a toy for your child at a store, a satellite lets the distribution center know that shelf needs to be restocked. Satellites are an integral part of our worldwide communication system. Keeping skilled professionals working and American factories that produce satellites and their components buzzing is good for our economy and for our security.

“In 1962, President John F. Kennedy so famously said, ‘We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.’ We must do what is hard and necessary to stay ahead in this space race,” said Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD).

In its final mission, the Space Shuttle Discovery will deliver supplies and parts to the International Space Station. Today’s scheduled launch of Discovery comes after months of delays caused by a fuel leak and other problems. The Discovery will be the first of three shuttles NASA plans to retire this year.

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