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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 819

Offered January 29, 2007

Commending Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority and its partners on the first commercial launch of a rocket in the Commonwealth.

Patron—Lewis

WHEREAS, on December 16, 2006, the board of directors, staff, and supporters of Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority celebrated a successful and promising first commercial launch of a rocket from Wallops Island on Virginia's Eastern Shore, which marked the Commonwealth's entry into the commercial space race; and

WHEREAS, the Air Force Minotaur 1 blasted off at 7:00 a.m. to an optimistic, cheering crowd, becoming the first rocket to launch from Wallops Island's Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport, known as M.A.R.S.; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, under the leadership of Governor George Allen, the Commonwealth began investigating the possibility of owning a launch facility, and in 1994 a group of government officials and industry executives began planning construction of a spaceport on land leased from the NASA Wallops Flight Facility, one of the oldest launch sites in the world with a 55-year legacy of over 16,000 rocket launches; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority (VCSFA), a Virginia state agency, built the commercial M.A.R.S. launch pad in 1998 on land leased at the Wallops facility to help bring jobs to the Eastern Shore region, and later the state of Maryland joined the venture; and

WHEREAS, Orbital Sciences Corporation of Dulles built the Minotaur 1 rocket with two stages made from decommissioned Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles and two stages from Pegasus rockets; and

WHEREAS, the rocket's primary payload, a TacSat-2 satellite, was released into orbit 254 miles above the earth, and promptly at 8:18 a.m. began transmission of data that was received by an Air Force satellite-tracking facility in Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, the \$36 million TacSat-2 surveillance satellite is first in a series of rockets that the Air Force will launch that will be equipped with 11 onboard experiments, including a military telescope-turned-surveillance-camera with a capability of sending information to troop commanders on the ground; and

WHEREAS, the rocket also released a second satellite, a shoebox-size GeneSat-2, carrying harmless bacteria, which NASA scientists hope will provide data on the effect of space conditions on the organisms, shedding light on building future lunar stations that are safe for human habitation; and

WHEREAS, the M.A.R.S. facility on Wallops Island is a national and regional cooperative effort involving Virginia, Maryland and governmental entities which have joined forces to operate the futuristic spaceport that may provide launch support services and facilities to end-users such as NASA, Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency or DARPA, the United States Air Force, and commercial and academic organizations; and

WHEREAS, the members of the VCSFA staff are Billie M. Reed, Executive Director; D'Ann G. Curtis, Executive Support Specialist; Rick Baldwin, M.A.R.S. Spaceport Manager; and Michele Marshall, M.A.R.S. Project Manager; and

WHEREAS, attempting to start a new trend in commercial launches, VCSFA's spaceport has a key competitive advantage—offering commercial, government, and academic users optimal scheduling of space access that is cost-effective and reliable; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend and congratulate the Virginia Commercial Space Flight Authority, NASA Wallops, Governor George Allen, the United States Air Force and all of its partners on the successful completion of the first commercial launch of a rocket in the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to Dr. Billie Reed, Executive Director of VCSFA; distinguished members of VCSFA Board of Directors, Patrick O. Gottschalk, Aneesh P. Chopra, Peter Jobse, Dr. Roseann Runte, Elmer Travis, Vincent C. Boles, Robert H. Meurer, Frederick B. Cooke, Jr., Mark E. Bitterman, Frank V. Moore, Thomas J. Savage, Jr., and Brian Darmody; Governor George Allen; John Campbell, Director of NASA Wallops; and Colonel Sam McCraw, Mission Director, United States Air Force as an expression of the General Assembly's appreciation of their extraordinary achievements and commitment to Virginia's future commercial space industry.

INTRODUCED

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