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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 899

Offered February 12, 2007

Commending Orbital Sciences Corporation and its partners on the first commercial launch of a satellite in the Commonwealth.

Patrons—Marshall, R.G.; Senator: Herring

WHEREAS, on December 16, 2006, at approximately 7:00 a.m., Orbital Sciences Corporation of Dulles, Virginia, celebrated a successful and promising first commercial launch of a TACSAT-2 satellite aboard a Minotaur 1 rocket from Wallops Island on Virginia's Eastern Shore, which marked the Commonwealth's entry into the commercial space race; and

WHEREAS, eleven minutes after lift-off from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS), the Minotaur 1 rocket released its primary payload, the United States Air Force TACSAT-2, and a second NASA Ames Research Center picosatellite, GeneSat-2, into a low-altitude orbit 254 miles above the earth; and

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

WHEREAS, Orbital Sciences Corporation's Minotaur 1 is the only proven launch vehicle currently capable of supporting the government's evolving Operationally Responsive Space (ORS) launch requirements, which dramatically reduce the time necessary to prepare for and successfully complete a space mission; and

WHEREAS, the \$36 million TACSAT-2 satellite is the first in a series of spacecraft that Orbital Sciences Corporation 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, also released was 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, Orbital Sciences Corporation carried out the Minotaur/TACSAT-2 mission in just 200 days in a trailblazing demonstration of its ORS satellite and launch vehicle capabilities; and

WHEREAS, the TACSAT-2 mission was the first Minotaur 1 flight to be conducted from MARS at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility; Orbital Sciences Corporation has launched five previous Minotaur 1 rockets from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California; and

WHEREAS, Orbital Sciences Corporation develops and manufactures small rockets and space systems for commercial, military, and government customers, providing satellites and launch vehicles, including low-orbit, geosynchronous-orbit, and planetary spacecraft for communications, remote sensing, scientific, and defense missions; rockets that deliver satellites into orbit; and missile defense systems that are used as interceptor and target vehicles; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly commend and congratulate the Orbital Sciences Corporation and its partners on the successful completion of the first commercial launch of a satellite in the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Ron Grabe, Executive Vice President, Orbital Sciences Corporation, and the members of his Launch Systems Group 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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