

## **Mikulski-Hutchison Amendment – An Overview**

**At the full Committee mark-up on Thursday, July 13, 2006, Sen. Mikulski and Sen. Hutchison will offer their amendment to pay back NASA for the costs of returning the Space Shuttle to flight. NASA has estimated the return to flight costs at just over \$2 billion so far. Sen. Mikulski and Sen. Hutchison are committed to providing the \$2 billion but will do so over two years, instead of one year.**

**The amendment they will offer in Committee will provide \$1 billion to the NASA Administrator to pay-back the costs of returning the Shuttle to flight and restore cuts to science, aeronautics and exploration programs that were cut in order to pay for the return to flight. The \$1 billion will be declared an emergency under the terms of the budget act and budget resolution. The amendment will not specify how much goes to each program. Rather, it gives the entire amount to the Administrator to be used at his discretion with authority to transfer funding to other programs. The report language will make it clear that in allocating the funding, the Administrator shall give priority to programs that were cut in order to pay for the return to flight. The Administrator will present his allocation plan to the Committee as part of the agency's annual operating plan which is subject to approval by the Committee. In addition, the amendment will also provide \$40 million to the Stennis Space Center and the Michoud Assembly Facility to complete repairs resulting from damage caused by Hurricane Katrina and the other hurricanes of 2005.**

**The goal is that by stretching the \$2 billion out over two years, the Senators are hoping that it will be an incentive for the Administration to include the extra funding in their 08 budget. If the FY 08 budget does not include the additional \$1 billion, then Sen. Mikulski and Sen. Hutchison will offer another amendment next year in Committee to fully reimburse the agency.**