

Support for rally quiet but mighty

Space employees stay behind scenes

BY DAVE BERMAN
FLORIDA TODAY

TITUSVILLE — Support appears to be building among space industry workers for the “Save Space” community rally scheduled for April 11 at the Cocoa Expo Sports Center, according to the event’s main organizer, Brevard County Commissioner Robin Fisher.

The rally is being held four days before President Barack Obama is due at Kennedy Space Center for a space conference.

Fisher said space workers find themselves in a tricky position: Many are hesitant to openly help in organizing the event because their ultimate boss is Obama, whose unclear plans for human spaceflight is a main focus of the rally.

Still, Fisher said, he thinks managers and aerospace contractors are supportive of their staffs attending the rally on their free time.

“I think they want to make sure their members will get to the

See RALLY, 4B

Fisher hopes for space rally attendance of 5,000 people

RALLY, from 1B

event,” Fisher said Thursday, during a planning meeting for the rally that was at his Titusville office.

“I understand the dynamics” of the behind-the-scenes support, Fisher said after the meeting. But he added that he would be disappointed if large numbers of space workers who face job losses with the end of the shuttle program “don’t come out and support the rally.”

Some 8,000 KSC workers are expected to lose their jobs after the shuttle fleet retires later this year.

Fisher said he is hoping for a total attendance of 5,000 at the rally, which is designed to show support for continued human space exploration after the shuttle stops flying.

U.S. Sen. George LeMieux, R-Tallahassee, con-

firmed late Wednesday that he will attend and speak at the rally. Previously confirmed speakers include Florida Lt. Gov. Jeff Kotkamp, U.S. Rep. Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, Florida Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, and shuttle astronauts Jon McBride and Bob Springer.

Parrish Medical Center President and CEO George Mikitarian will be the master of ceremonies. The Titusville hospital also contributed \$3,000 toward the event’s estimated \$10,000 budget.

In addition to government officials and their aides, the rally organizing committee includes representatives of the local business community, unions, churches, schools and space-related organizations. ■

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Space forum

FLORIDA TODAY will host a space forum at 2:30 p.m. April 9 at the Simpkins Fine Arts Center on the Brevard Community College Cocoa campus in Cocoa.

U.S. Reps. Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, and Suzanne Kosmas, D-New Smyrna Beach, will participate. BCC is a co-sponsor. Matt Reed, a senior editor at FLORIDA TODAY, is the moderator.

Residents can submit questions at the event, or in advance to: news@floridatoday.com (put “space” in the subject line).

The forum is open to the public, but seating is limited. The event will be streamed live at floridatoday.com and taped for later showing on WBCC-TV.

If you go

The “Save Space” community rally will be April 11 at the Cocoa Expo Sports Center, 500 Friday Road, near Interstate 95 and State Road 520. The program begins at 4 p.m. Doors will open at 3 p.m. For more information on the effort, go to www.savespace.us.