

# Working to save jobs

Efforts to help shuttle workers and the Space Coast weather the end of the shuttle program are proceeding on multiple levels. FLORIDA TODAY takes a look at what your government — from the county commission to the halls of Congress — is doing to help. The initiatives range from a letter-writing campaign to appeals for additional grant money.

## Congressional action centers on money

Most congressional action has centered on securing more money for NASA.

Florida Senators Bill Nelson and George LeMieux and Reps. Suzanne Kosmas, D-New Smyrna Beach, and Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, urged President Barack Obama in an October 2009 letter to shift \$3 billion in unspent stimulus funds to NASA's human spaceflight program.

Kosmas won approval of an amendment to small-business legislation to allow photonics companies to receive grants that spur new business. Photonics technology, which includes fiber-optic communications and laser technology, already provides 27,000 jobs statewide in aerospace and other industries. Her amendment was added to small-business legislation that passed the House and is pending in the Senate.

Kosmas also won approval of an amendment to small-business legislation to allow companies that contribute to the space shuttle to commercialize after the program retires.

Her district had 300 businesses with \$200 million in shuttle contracts last year. The goal is to encourage the companies to continue developing products in fields such as health, medicine and technology.

Posey sponsored legislation with Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., in April 2009 to require NASA to extend the life of the shuttle by flying at least two shuttle missions per year starting in 2010 rather than paying Russia to launch American crews and cargo.

The extension would last until 2015. The bill has been sent to a House subcommittee with no further action.

Bart Jansen, FLORIDA TODAY



## Save Space writing campaign sends 500,000 letters to Washington

Brevard County Commissioner Robin Fisher has a message for President Barack Obama: Save NASA jobs.

"To retain our nation's leading science and technological standing in the world, it is necessary that we take steps now to retain this unique workforce," Fisher wrote in a September letter to Obama.

"We have initiated a letter-writing campaign to emphasize the importance of the space program to this community, this state, and this nation," he added.

The grassroots Save Space initiative and its Web site, [www.SaveSpace.us](http://www.SaveSpace.us), remain active after their initial Oct. 31 sunset dates.

As of this week, the Save Space Web site had racked up more than 66,000 hits, said Kimberly Prosser, county spokeswoman. In addition, the program had more than 4,500 Facebook fans and more than 130 Twitter followers.

Spearheaded by Fisher, this crusade has expanded to include cross-country digital billboard messages and, according to various reports, participation by seven other states — Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio and California.

Prosser said she was not aware of any other county initiatives related to the pending shuttle retirement.

The Save Space Web site is designed and maintained by the county information technology department.

Rick Neale, FLORIDA TODAY

## EDC working to minimize job loss

Ensure that Florida remains in the forefront of future NASA programs.

Boost federal research and development spending.

And capture a share of burgeoning alternative-energy markets.

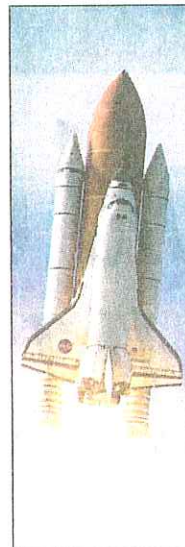
These are goals of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast to help Brevard County withstand the pending space shake-up, said Lynda Weatherman, president and chief executive officer.

"Whether the shuttle program is extended or the Ares program changes course, our job remains the same — to bring new opportunities to the Space Coast's businesses and citizens," Weatherman said.

As a previous EDC success story, she pointed to Lockheed Martin's 2006 announcement that Orion, the crew vehicle, will be assembled in Brevard.

Another future objective: Bring prep work for the International Space Station National Laboratory — such as hardware assembly and experiment preparation — to Brevard.

Rick Neale, FLORIDA TODAY



NASA

**Space shuttle Atlantis lifts off from Kennedy Space Center on Nov. 16.**

## NASA estimating impact

NASA must report regularly to Congress on the anticipated impact of shuttle retirement on its civil servant and contractor workforce across the nation, including at Kennedy Space Center.

Three reports have been submitted, the most recent last July. Another will follow February's release of the president's proposed 2011 budget.

Already, NASA has included shuttle program workers in some Constellation projects, like the Ares I-X flight test last October, to get them familiar with the new program's procedures and requirements.

The agency has also created a Space Shuttle Transition Liaison Office tasked with making sure affected communities know about potential job opportunities at other federal agencies.

James Dean, FLORIDA TODAY