

*I think we should solve our problems here on Earth before we go into space.*

That is the quickest way people dismiss space advocates who call out for the government for a greater human presence in space. Of course Americans must solve problems on Earth, however space is the solution.

First and foremost space exploration could grow the American economy faster than westward expansion itself in the early 1800s. There have been a multitude of new technologies derived from space such as fire protective gear, GPS, and satellites that have affected millions. Satellites have connected the world together with the Internet and cell phone signals have made our planet globally intertwined. The potential for innovation once we go beyond the moon and land on mars or even moving away from our solar system is substantial.

Second having a high tech industry in America will attract highly educated people from around the world and those people tend to make a lot of money. Not only will this add to the diversity of other nations within the industry but also we will obtain some of the greatest minds in the world. The problem with today is most of our educated populace is actually leaving the U.S. for opportunities in other countries even if the money isn't there. People will stay in America if the country is the leader in space travel. While the highly educated are designing the spacecraft there will be thousands of new jobs opened for people to build the spacecraft. The hundreds of unemployed autoworkers and aircraft manufactures in our country are only a few training classes away from being able to build space vehicles and be proud of it.

The cultural support for space travel will be on celebrity level. Similar in 1969 when the first moonwalkers returned to Earth as heroes; the first Mars walkers, the first to land on an asteroid, the first to ride a comet, all will secure there place in history forever. With that cultural shift no longer will we need to drag our kids to school before throwing them in a struggling economy. Just like how kids dream to be NFL stars or baseball legends, a new generation will driven academically to be a part of the space age.

The resources of the earth are not limitless. We are finding resources and minerals that are located in spotty locations on the Earth. These resources do not come from the planet however; they come from the impact of objects like meteoroids. Meteoroids as well as asteroids loaded with natural metals hit the moon as well. But the real money lies in the asteroid field in our solar system that is basically trillions of dollars clumped into one rock. In fact all the gold, iron, platinum, etc., mined from Earth's crust came originally from asteroids that hit the Earth after the crust cooled. Even though the cost of landing a spaceship on an asteroid for mining cost far too much for a solid private economic investment now, humanity could easily accommodate the price by reducing the cost of extractive through developing more advanced technology. We thought it was impossible to land on the moon in the past but through human ingenuity we accomplished our goal in only 9 years.

N.A.S.A. should lead the way into space followed by the private space companies. Space is our future and the U.S. government needs to increase funds to the agency. Most Americans believe that increasing funds to N.A.S.A. will waste all their tax money on money draining adventures instead of problems at home. This is not true. The national budget for 2007 totaled for 2.784 trillion dollars, the N.A.S.A. budget was 16.143 billion, which is only 0.58% of this. Even during the golden years of N.A.S.A. during the 1960s in the mist of the Vietnam War and the Great Society programs, the N.A.S.A. spending only made up 5% of the national budget. How does the N.A.S.A. budget compare with amount of money the government spends on social programs? Adding the programs such as the Department of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, Social Security, Agriculture, and Labor results in 1.581 trillion dollars. For every 1 dollar the government spends on N.A.S.A. it spends 98 dollar on social programs. If a mere one percent is cut on social programs N.A.S.A.'s budget will double.

Another factor that strains the federal budget is the 652.5 billion dollars for defense spending. While it is obvious that we should maintain a strong military our country's defense spending is more than the next fifteen largest defense spenders put together (and most of the countries are our allies). This spending is excessive

and is a waste and the more we worry about the next big threat the less progress our country makes. Even if we cut the defense spending by half it will still be a larger sum than China, Russia, France, and Britain put together.

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2011/12/defence-spending>

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