

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Commerce Committee

BILL: SM 944

INTRODUCER: Senator Altman and others

SUBJECT: Space Shuttle

DATE: March 2, 2010

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Pugh	Cooper	CM	Favorable
2.			RC	
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

America’s Space Shuttle program is winding down a 40-year mission to broaden human research and exploration in outer space. The last flight of a Space Shuttle orbiter is scheduled for September 2010, to transport supplies to the International Space Station (ISS).

NASA already has announced plans to preserve the orbiters and thousands of other “artifacts” of the Space Shuttle program. It has been soliciting proposals from museums, public entities, and eligible non-profit organizations interested in showcasing them. The orbiters are getting the most attention. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has been promised one of the orbiters, and competition is growing among the states for the other two. The Visitor’s Center at Kennedy Space Center (KSC) is among a number of entities nationwide submitting proposals for an orbiter.

There will be costs associated with winning the competition to display an orbiter. NASA will charge \$28.8 million to prepare each orbiter for display and to transport it to its final destination. Additionally, most, if not all, of the museums and other venues bidding for an orbiter will have to make substantial improvements to their facilities, or even build new facilities, to exhibit an orbiter.

Senate Memorial 944 requests that the U.S. Congress direct one of the decommissioned Space Shuttle orbiters be preserved and placed on permanent display at KSC.

II. Present Situation:

As successor to the Apollo program, the Space Shuttle program¹ is focused on carrying various payloads into lower earth orbit, ferrying crew and supplies to the ISS, and servicing or repairing the Hubble Space Telescope² and other infrastructure. The Space Shuttle orbiters were the first U.S. spacecraft built to be reused, and to return to Earth horizontally. Five orbiters capable of space flight were built: Atlantis, Challenger, Columbia, Discovery, and Endeavor; a sixth, Enterprise, was built for suborbital test flights.³

The first Space Shuttle orbiter to launch into lower earth orbit was Columbia, in April 12, 1981. The final flight is scheduled for September 16, 2010, to be made by Discovery to ferry more equipment to the ISS. All 130 launches of orbiters into space have occurred at KSC.⁴

The Space Shuttle program's retirement date of 2010 was announced many years ago. But since at least 2005, there has been discussion about delaying that retirement date because the Space Shuttle program's successor, Constellation, has experienced cost and timing problems. Last month, the Obama Administration announced plans to eliminate the Constellation program and instead contract with commercial space launch companies to continue space research, transportation, and exploration activities. This plan is the subject of current debate in Congress.

Meanwhile, NASA is proceeding with plans to make the Space Shuttle orbiters and other program artifacts available to state and local governments, educational institutions, museums, and other eligible non-profit organizations, as authorized by Congress in 2008.⁵ It has created a website with information about the "Space Shuttle Transition"⁶ and a separate website⁷ where eligible entities can "bid" on specific items, from tools to space suits, with the highest bidders winning the right to publicly display these artifacts. NASA will begin distributing the artifacts next year.

The deadline for proposals for obtaining one of the remaining orbiters was February 19, 2010. The exact number of proposals received has not been announced, but various media accounts indicate that at least 21 proposals were submitted. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., has been promised the Discovery orbiter. Next spring, NASA is expected to announce the two institutions chosen to display the Atlantis and the Endeavor.

NASA will charge the Smithsonian and the other two institutions \$28.8 million each, payable in full by April 11, 2011, for the orbiters. Of that amount, \$20.5 million is the estimated cost to clean and otherwise prepare an orbiter for display, and \$8.3 million is the cost to transport it to its new home, by December 2011.

¹ More information available at http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/main/index.html.

² More information available at <http://hubblesite.org>. Last visited Feb. 22, 2010.

³ Supra FN 1. The Enterprise is on display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum's annex at Dulles International Airport in Virginia.

⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_space_shuttle_missions.

⁵ Section 613 of P.L. 110-422. Available at <http://legislative.nasa.gov/PL%20110-422.pdf>.

⁶ More information available at http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/transition/home/index.html. Last visited Feb. 22, 2010.

⁷ See <http://gsaxcess.gov/NASAWel.htm>. Last visited Feb. 22, 2010.

Several institutions, including the Smithsonian, the U.S. Air Force Museum in Ohio, and Space Center Houston, already have begun fund-raising efforts to pay for NASA's orbiter preparation and delivery costs and to expand or build facilities to house an orbiter.

Space Florida staff indicated that discussions about raising money to pay for the preparation, delivery, and display costs of an orbiter at KSC's Visitor Center are ongoing. One source of funding for the display facility could be revenue bonds issued by Space Florida, and repaid with admission fees.⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SM 944 expresses the Legislature's request that the U.S. Congress direct one of the retired Space Shuttle orbiters be preserved and placed on permanent display at KSC.

In making that request, SM 944 notes that:

- KSC has launched all Space Shuttle orbiters since the first one in 1981;
- In FY 2008, the Space Shuttle program was responsible for approximately 15 percent of KSC's budget allocation; and
- More than 40,000 jobs in Florida can be attributed to KSC's operations, an indication that, in addition to its historical importance, the Space Shuttle program has been significant economically to Floridians.

Copies of the memorial, if approved by the Legislature and the Governor, will be distributed to the President of the United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and to each member of Florida's Congressional delegation.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

⁸ Conversation with Frank DiBello, president of Space Florida, on Feb. 23, 2010.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.