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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 30, 1987

Dear Colleague:

We recently introduced S. 407, legislation to grant a Federal Charter to the Challenger Center for Space Science Education.

The Challenger Center will serve as a "living memorial" to the Challenger crewmembers who lost their lives on January 28, 1986. It will host a national learning center which shall serve as a model for space science education. Additionally, it will, for the first time, offer children and teachers the unique opportunity to have the hands-on experience of working in a simulated space station.

The concept for this Center has grown out of the combined thinking and efforts of the immediate family members of the Challenger crew. They felt the greatest memorial to their loved ones would be something that carried on the dream and mission of the crewmembers. They wanted a dynamic and purposeful memorial, not just an edifice of bricks or mortar, to remind us of the sacrifice and commitment of the Challenger astronauts. The families focused on the crew's common goal of expanding the educational horizons for young people and for teachers. They found in the concept of the Challenger Center the embodiment of their goals.

We are all aware of the significant crisis in science education and, correspondingly, in space science education. The need for enhancing opportunities in these sciences is evident and is made more urgent by the vast interest in and constituency for more and better programs. One measure of this interest is the incredible growth of the Young Astronauts program which has over 300,000 members in chapters throughout the United States. The Young Astronauts and a number of other organizations in the country are currently involved in a variety of activities to promote space science education and to support various aspects of the Nation's space program.

Our intention is to make the Challenger Center the nation's principle commemorative effort in honor of those seven brave Americans. The Challenger Center will not detract from these other efforts, but will work in concert with them, acting as a reference and teaching center, as well as offering the hands-on experience of the proposed Space Life Stations. Our legislation recognizes the efforts of those groups engaged in activity similar to that envisioned by the Center, and places an obligation on the Center to "participate in a spirit of cooperation and reciprocity" with those "other societies."

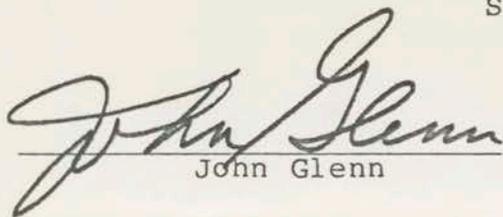
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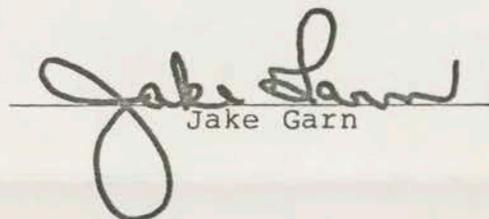
As you know, a Federal Charter offers to an organization the recognition and stature of being acknowledged by the Federal Government. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, the U. S. Olympic Committee, the Future Farmers of America and other worthy organizations enjoy a Federal Charter. The Charter does not act as an endorsement, nor can the organization claim congressional approval or Federal Government authority for any of its activities, unless so authorized by Congress or the appropriate Federal authorities. We have taken the unusual step of including in this bill appropriations authorization for up to \$10 million for the purpose of assisting the Challenger Center in becoming a national learning center. This would comprise up to 20% of its total funding.

In January, you cosponsored a resolution declaring January 28, 1987 to be "National Challenger Center Day." The resolution was signed by the President and served as a fitting way to commemorate the year anniversary of the Challenger tragedy. We ask for your assistance now in making the concept of the Challenger Center a reality by joining us as a cosponsor to S. 407.

Please contact Louanne Ferrin with Senator Garn (X 41341) or Anne Lester with Senator Glenn (X 45018) with your reply or any questions. A copy of the bill, a summary of the programs, services, and development plans for the Challenger Center, and a picture conceptualizing the Challenger Center are attached.

Sincerely,


John Glenn


Jake Garn