

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 14, 2010

The Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President,

As members of the New York State Congressional delegation, we are writing to demonstrate our unified support for the Intrepid Air, Space, and Sea Museum's ("The Intrepid") proposal to permanently house and exhibit one of three soon-to-be-decommissioned NASA Space Shuttle Orbiters. As one of America's leading historic, cultural, and educational institutions the Intrepid Museum is uniquely qualified to house the shuttle when it is decommissioned and fulfill NASA's stated objective of displaying the shuttles where the most people will see them.

The location of the Intrepid Museum in New York City would allow over 50 million New Yorkers and visitors each year to see and learn an important part of history and technological achievement – a volume that no other location can provide. The Intrepid Museum already draws almost 1 million visitors per year, 70% of whom come from outside of the New York City metropolitan area, a number that would spike considerably with the addition of a world-class space shuttle exhibit.

Furthermore, the Intrepid Museum has proposed displaying the space shuttle in a glass enclosure on the city's public Pier 86, that will house supporting exhibitry, potential classrooms and other amenities for visitors and students alike. Those without a museum ticket will have the opportunity to walk onto the public pier and view the shuttle for free.

The Intrepid boasts a deep connection to the history of the United States Space Program. The ship was tasked in the 1960s with retrieving astronauts from some of the first manned space flights when their capsules splashed down in the Pacific. In May 1962, the Intrepid served as a primary recovery vessel for the Mercury 7 space mission commanded by astronaut Scott Carpenter. In March of 1965, Intrepid helicopters pick up Gemini 3 astronauts John Young and Virgil "Gus" Grissom and recovered their two-person capsule nicknamed "The Unsinkable Molly Brown."

Bringing the space shuttle to the Intrepid Museum would provide an unprecedented new educational opportunity for students and tourists alike from around the world. It will be the source of an entirely new educational program that can easily and seamlessly be built upon the Intrepid's already strong focus on the space portion of Intrepid's history, and would expand the understanding of the depth and importance that space exploration has had for our entire nation.

Moreover, the Intrepid Museum has demonstrated the capacity to raise funds to complete significant capital projects and is well positioned to take on the costs of both moving the shuttle and building a structure for its display. The Intrepid Museum completed renovations to Pier 86 at a cost of \$115 million and has recently raised another \$120 million to build facilities for injured war veterans and their families.

It is clear to us that the Intrepid Museum and New York City has the right stuff to make the most of being awarded one of our greatest technological achievements. As the final determination draws near on where to permanently house and display the *Atlantis*, *Discovery* and *Endeavor* space shuttles, we urge you to land a space shuttle in the heart of New York City.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Chuck Sch

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Jenold Thullen

Paul Tonko

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Jah Hall

Yvette J. Clarke

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