

Change

Continued from Page 1C.

We have been purchasing our space program with tax dollars. We must have the ability to purchase space "stuff" with the same dollars we spend on cars, personal computers and vacations. We need both, and the fire, if properly nurtured and controlled, can accomplish this.

An organization with unlimited funds, government or corporate, eventually becomes bloated and loses sight of what it must accomplish to prosper. The fire can burn away the fat, and give us a NASA that continues to excel at unmanned exploration and basic aeronautic and space research. Equally important, it can get NASA out of the space operations business, which effectively prevents our fledgling commercial space industry from getting off the ground ... literally and figuratively.

A reinvigorated NASA will be worth purchasing with our tax dollars because it will be doing what we expect our research agencies to do: push back the frontiers of science, technology and knowledge. Like our National Academy of Science, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health and others, NASA will contribute much that becomes a lowest-common-denominator item of value to the American public. Cleaner, quieter, faster, safer airplanes. Knowledge of the sun to better understand our weather. And more.

Some of this basic research will be vital to young and energetic commercial space industries which will provide goods and services we will want to purchase with our nontax dollars. New sources of fuels and ores. Hotels in orbit. Two-hour (perhaps less!) flights from New York to London. And more.

So, the next time you read about NASA's trials and tribulations, resist the urge to demand more funding for our outdated federal space program. Consider that entirely new goods and services can be provided for your enjoyment if a different NASA supports our commercial space endeavors, leading to a proper balance of government and corporate activities.

Consider that our lives demand change – for our venerable institutions as much as for ourselves. It's time to realize that space is a place, not a federal program. Like the old Western frontier, space offers new opportunities for American scientific and commercial ingenuity. Get the government out of the way.