been understood that the space shuttle will be retired next year. After that happens, we will be relying upon Russia to get our astronauts into space.

The original plan was that once the shuttle was retired, the next vehicle to get us into space would be the Ares I. That is the pivotal point where the decision has to be made: Shall we go ahead with Ares I?

I am very concerned that NASA may want to divert precious resources from the Ares I program in the hope that the commercial space industry can fill the void. Well, it is disconcerting to me because we have a successful track record of the Ares program but a less than desirable record of the commercial space industry. We have invested over 4 years and $6 billion in the Ares I and Orion programs, and it is on track.

Just last month, we had a successful ground test of the new Ares I rocket in Utah. Later this month, NASA will conduct the first flight test—on track to deliver a safe, reliable rocket.

Changes in NASA's plan should only be made if alternatives are available to provide significant advantages in cost, schedule, performance, and safety. The program that is working should not be dropped unless those advantages are very clear, and as of now there are no credible alternatives. To me, it makes sense to stay committed to a program we have already invested billions of dollars in and which has met its significant benchmarks.

Right now, the Ares I is the only credible solution we have for getting crew and cargo services into space once the shuttle is retired. The Ares I system came out of the Gehman report that followed the Columbia accident, recommending that the shuttle be replaced with a launch system that would maximize crew safety. Aries will achieve those standards.

The system builds on an existing manufacturing infrastructure that builds on our strengths. We already have the industrial base to go ahead with Ares. We do not have to invent anything new. We paid for the research. Why would we forego years of successful research and billions of dollars in the promise of an untested method of getting into space? Why would we take the gamble? If it turns out the hope that the commercial people could fill the void is wrong, we will have lost the industrial base that preserves our existing alternative to the commercial system.

What will NASA do then, if that which they might place their hopes in turns out to fail, and they have dismantled the program we now know works? How much money would we save if we were confronted with that situation a few years down the road? We risk losing the industrial base that is paramount to American competitiveness.

I know I will be accused of being parochial because a good portion of that industrial base is in my home State of Utah, but that does not lessen its significance or its competence.

The Ares program takes advantage of facilities and an already-trained workforce that has made the most reliable rockets in the world, having flown and tested over 200 of these solid rocket motors. We are already seeing reductions in our manufacturing base in this circumstance in Utah. Just this last week, 550 more people who would be critical to NASA in maintaining that base have lost their jobs, and if we abandon the Ares program, we could lose thousands more. Yes, I am interested because it is important to my State, but I am equally, if not more, interested because I think it is important to the Nation not to take this kind of gamble.

I seriously urge the administration to take a look at the bird they have in their hand, the bird that has flown over 200 times successfully, and not be too excited about the bird that may lie waiting for them somewhere in the bush.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Utah for his remarks. We have essentially three space Senators on the floor—the distinguished Senator from Florida, our Presiding Officer, who has actually been an astronaut, and you can ask him if he wants to go into space with the lowest bidder. I think there are certain things that one can't pick who the lowest bidder will be.

I think there is much to be debated. We have the Augustine report, on which there has been a hearing, and our bill, the CJS bill, we fully fund the reliable transportation system that would be developed by our government. If the President were to change that, that would be a new direction and a new appropriation on which there would be tremendous debate and discussion.

So I wish to assure the Senator from Utah and the Presiding Officer, who often speaks for the brave men and women who go into space, that what the CJS bill does is fully fund, No. 1, what we need now to make sure our space shuttle is safe and fit for duty as it comes to the end in this decade of its usable service. Our No. 1 priority will always be the safety of the astronauts, not the bottom line.

The second thing is that in our appropriations we disagreed with the House. We actually put money in the Federal checkbook to develop the new programs, the new technologies for the next generation of reliable space transportation vehicles, and it follows very much the framework that the Senator from Utah has outlined.

So we look forward, once again, to working on our space program in a bipartisan way. One of the joys of chairing this committee is that when it comes to our National Space and Aeronautics Agency, we work on a bipartisan basis.

The Senator from Utah might be interested to know, when I first came to the Senate and went on the then VA-HUD Committee that funded NASA, the ranking member was Jake Garn, your colleague. As we all recall with fondness, Senator Garn was himself also a Senator astronaut. I must say it was Senator Garn who—I was a Goddard gal; Goddard is in Maryland. But space is about space, not about an individual State. Through his excellent workmanship, his patience, his guidance, I came to know the space program. Within 2 years, I happened to, with the retirement of Senator Proxmire, take over the committee. I could not have been an effective Senator had it not been for the wise guidance I received from Jake Garn. We did it because we worked together.

So this Senator has a real fondness for the Senator from Utah speaking about the space program. But I only want to reiterate how, when we work together, it is bipartisan, it is in the interests of our country, it is about the stars and the galaxies and the planets, but it is also about developing that new technology that creates the new jobs.

I am here sitting in a wheelchair wearing a space boot. I look like I am Sally Ride's advance woman. But it is a special device. Many materials were developed through our space program. It is an innovative technology, where you go beyond the outdated casts that neither expanded nor contracted during the day that this one can do. So this technology externally protects me from, quite frankly, anybody treading on me, if you can believe it, but it protects me. Internally, it has the genius devices that can deal with either the contraction or the expansion of your leg in the course of a day. All of that came out of our space program. So it is not only about Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI and her space boot but all over we have been able to develop new medical devices because of our space program: digital mammography, saving the lives of women; a space boot that makes sure that after you have had the services of a talented and gifted surgeon, your leg is also protected. So you better believe I am going to protect the space program as much as the space program helped protect my leg today. So I wanted to let the Senator know that.

We are going to be voting in about 5 minutes on a Vitter amendment. I know there is another one that the Senator from Utah has cosponsored, which is going to be tomorrow. Right now, we are going to vote in a few minutes on sanctuary cities. I am going to yield the floor to the Senator from New Jersey, who is very knowledgeable on this topic.

I yield to Senator MENENDEZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Maryland for yielding.

AMENDMENT NO. 2630

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the time until 5:55 p.m. be for