

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 10, 1999

CONTACT: Pat Dasch
202-543-1900 ext. 75

National Space Society Announces Policy On Transhab

Recently, one research program at NASA has generated debate in the halls of Congress and a firestorm of controversy within the space advocacy community.

Transhab, a research and development program intended to investigate the potential of habitable, inflatable space structures, has come under fire within the House of Representatives. Concerns were raised by legislators that the R & D effort would emerge from the ISS office as a construction project that would replace the current station habitation module. The fear was that with the replacement would come a dramatic increase in the cost of the International Space Station and delays in the contemplated construction schedule. Language was added to the House version of NASA's multiyear appropriations bill to halt work on habitable inflatable structures for one year.

In response to this threat to Transhab funding some advocacy organizations have mounted strenuous efforts to ensure that monies for inflatables research within the ISS program office is retained.

The complexity of this issue, however, defies a quick and easy solution. Inflatable habitation may offer a safe and cost effective method of providing living volume on Mars, the Moon and in space. At the same time, the promise of this technology should not become an excuse to further delay completion of ISS or raise its cost.

In light of these considerations, the Policy Committee of the National Space Society makes the following recommendations:

1. Research and development of inflatables technology should continue at NASA;
2. NASA should not develop under its own auspices an inflatable habitation module for the International Space Station; and
3. The National Space Society should endorse the concept of commercial development of supplemental habitation for the International Space Station.

The Policy Committee is confident that these recommendations balance the issues involved and most importantly help to promote the development of technologies which advance space settlement in a speedy and cost effective manner.