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January 6, 2014

David Helfand  
President  
American Astronomical Society  
2000 Florida Ave, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20009-1231

Dear Dr. Helfand:

Thank you so much for selecting me as the inaugural recipient of the American Astronomical Society's award for Public Service to the Astronomical Sciences. What a wonderful honor! I regret that I cannot join you at your society's annual meeting to accept this award in-person.

I am grateful to you and all of your members for all your hard work and dedication. You have made the United States the world leader in astronomy, and I share your desire to keep our lead in studying the Universe for decades to come. I believe in American exceptionalism - not just because of our investment in innovation, but because America's amazing scientific breakthroughs and discoveries beyond our own galaxy have inspired so many future scientists, inventors and entrepreneurs back here on Earth. Hubble Space Telescope – the greatest tool for studying the universe since Galileo perfected the refractor telescope – has been our gift to the world. That's why I fight so hard to invest in America's science and exploration.

As the chairwoman of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations subcommittee, I have ensured that NASA and the National Science Foundation have received proper funding to advance astronomical science – funding to keep the Hubble Space Telescope operating and its data flowing, and funding to keep the James Webb Space Telescope construction on-schedule and on-budget. During fiscal year 2014, I continue to fight to see that the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Telescope mission gets started, all the while ensuring that astronomical STEM education stays on track so future astronomers are ready to follow in your footsteps.

Thank you for honoring me; I want to honor you. You can count on me to stand sentry over federal funding to ensure that America remains the innovative leader in space exploration and scientific discovery. I wish you all the best as you embark on new discoveries. May the force be with you!

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Justice, Science and Related Agencies