30 November 2010

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The Planetary Society strongly supports resuming the production of plutonium-238, the material needed to power spacecraft exploring far from the Sun. Since the dawn of the space age the United States has led the world in deep space missions, but without production of this specially suited plutonium, the U.S. will sacrifice its leadership in science and cripple the world’s ability to explore and make discoveries in space.

Historically, technological innovations created for the space program have led to innovations in countless other industries. It’s not difficult to imagine innovations in energy production here on Earth arising from research in electricity production in deep space.

The Administration proposed in its fiscal year 2011 budget to restart the domestic production of plutonium-238 to meet NASA’s needs and ensure that we have a rich and vibrant space science program. The Planetary Society, therefore, strongly urges Congress, as it works to complete the Fiscal Year 2011 appropriations, to provide full funding as proposed by the Administration to restart the production of this vital material.

Respectfully,

Bill Nye
Executive Director

Jim Bell
President

Heidi Hammel
Vice President