

Hawaii

Lt. Governor James “Duke” Aiona

In my opinion, the most important issue is in its nature two pronged. It is sadly evident that we as a nation, as well as the state I call home, are lacking in the STEM skills: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

Here in Hawaii, my administration has promoted what we like to call the ‘Hawaii Education Initiative’. The initiative will include providing Hawai‘i students with world-class analytical and problem-solving skills developed through STEM education. This initiative is part of a long-term effort to develop the innovation capacity of Hawaii’s workforce in order to successfully compete in the global economy. The programs started by this initiative will focus on creating life-long learning and skill-building opportunities for our citizens.

Education is vitally important, but it can only provide the tools that our young people can use in tomorrow’s economy. We cannot expect to educate our youth and simply hope that their skills will be relevant in the future job market. We need to guarantee that there will be jobs here in America; jobs in the aerospace field.

Historically, our nation has struggled to provide adequate and sustained funding for our major space initiatives. Capturing only 0.6% of the federal budget, NASA has been tasked to help advance multiple components of our aerospace industry – from aviation to earth observation to space science to space exploration – and as such has been forced to make fiscal tradeoffs among all of these key areas. Furthermore, support for specific missions have risen and fallen with political turnovers in both the Administration and Congress, leading to a lack of continuity in sustained funding for components of both robotic and human space exploration – not only impeding our ability to successfully execute these programs, but also challenging our international reputation as a credible and reliable partner in multinational space endeavors.

As such, we need to develop policies to ensure that both adequate and sustained funding is provided to support the long-term efforts required to design, develop, implement and maintain a robust aerospace enterprise for America.

In the first 100 days of the new president’s term, he must articulate a vision for his term that would improve education in this country. This must be done with blessings from Congress and it must be done through cooperation on both sides of the aisle. A strategy must also be developed to stabilize the space program, so as to make it less vulnerable to the fluctuations in their funding. Also, to excite the public about aerospace, an objective must be set for the space program so it can offer the general public a more tangible purpose.

Education, especially focusing on science, technology, engineering and math, is the most important issue we are dealing with as a state. That is closely followed by defense funding, aerospace workforce, and energy and environmental considerations,

which I believe are more like 2a, 2b, and 2c in terms of importance for Hawaii. Trade regulations and manned spaceflight are not as critical when compared to the other issues for our state.

Barack Obama appears to be very concerned with improving the education offered in this country, unfortunately, he seems to want to do this by delaying the NASA Constellation program for five years. Obama wants to invest \$10 billion more per year in education. To do that, the Obama campaign would have to zero out Constellation and then find additional offsets or spending elsewhere in the federal budget. America is about to enter a workforce crisis over the next decade as the scientists and engineers lured to the industry by the space race and the Cold War hit retirement age. There are not enough qualified young Americans available to take their place. A successful space program can only help convince children that aerospace is the perfect career choice.

John McCain wants to keep NASA competitive with Russia and China, and has said that he will be willing to spend more taxpayer dollars on aerospace funding as president. In a meeting earlier this month with newspaper editors in Florida, McCain said that he thought Americans respond to setting goals for specific projects. He also mentioned that he would be intrigued by putting a man on Mars.