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Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie on the American Aerospace Industry

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**STATEMENT BY SENATOR MUSKIE
ON PRESERVING THE HEALTH OF THE AMERICAN AEROSPACE
INDUSTRY, AND ASSURING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY TO ITS WORKERS**

The aerospace industry has long been a vital sector of the American economy. I am committed to a policy of strong support for the aerospace industry for these reasons:

It is vital to our national security.

It advances technological and engineering knowledge in general, and contributes to improvements in the quality of life through technological spin-offs.

Its work advances our scientific knowledge of outer space -- knowledge important not only for its own sake, but because it can contribute to our well-being on earth.

It has become a major investment of the Federal Government over the years, which the Government must maintain for the welfare of all Americans.

The most disturbing aspect of the relationship between the Government and the aerospace industry is the "boom-and-bust" syndrome of government demand. Portions of the industry have suffered enormously because of a precipitous decline in government spending from the peak years of the 1960's. The wide fluctuations in government demand for the services of the industry have caused severe and unfair hardships for those employed by it.

The United States in the 1970's will benefit from a steady, growing demand for the services of the aerospace industry. To assure such demand, on a steady basis, requires careful control over proposed government programs. Too often in the past, extravagant projects have been undertaken only to be later repudiated by Congress and/or the Administration because their expense did not seem justified, either by national security needs or domestic priorities.

In order to implement a policy of steady, growing demand, and avoid the "boom-and-bust" syndrome of the past, I will appoint an expert Commission to prepare within 120 days of the beginning of my Administration, recommendations for a rational ordering of overall Federal requirements in aerospace. These will be the basis for establishing concrete spending goals that will maintain a steady and predictable employment base in the industry.

While emphasizing the need for a long-term solution to the "boom-and-bust" syndrome of the past, I will also take immediate action to alleviate the hardships caused in the aerospace industry by the current "bust" cycle in government demand.

Action must be taken immediately to bring relief to the industry in those areas of the country -- such as Florida, Southern California, Massachusetts and the Seattle area, to name only a few obvious examples -- which have been particularly hard-hit by the decline of government demand. These are my suggestions for action now:

1) Between 20% and 40% of all employees in the aerospace industry have no particular space expertise. They are administrators, police custodial personnel, and a wide variety of other service personnel. Layoff from a space industry employer in a time of economic slump makes it difficult for them to find other employment. They deserve to participate in the public service employment programs I have recommended to Congress, which would create hundreds of thousands of needed jobs in hospitals, police protection systems, and other vital public service areas. They also deserve full access to whatever job training they need to make an upward job adjustment, with a guarantee of a job at the end of the training.

2) For the other unemployed aerospace personnel, the situation is different. Technicians outnumber engineers and scientists about 3 to 1. Although their educational backgrounds differ, both have a technical expertise that is fairly specialized. Their skills and knowledge can be translated fairly easily into two other areas: the environment (particularly pollution control) and computer software. Pollution control requires a strong comprehension of chemical engineering, a field whose problems are not far removed from what aerospace personnel have been doing. The role of computers in the aerospace industry is so pervasive that they are all somewhat expert in the field.

As President, I would immediately issue an Executive Order to require all relevant government departments and agencies to locate new facilities in areas of high-technology unemployment, to alleviate existing hardships in these areas as soon as possible.

For these reasons, the Government could move now to offer jobs to aerospace employees who have lost their jobs. Florida's Brevard County, site of the Kennedy Space Center, is a good example. The government could actively create new jobs in this area by requiring such Federal agencies as the Environmental Protection Agency, which is expanding and has need for their kinds of skills, and the Internal Revenue Service, which is now a major computerized operation with need for competent personnel, to establish offices there. There are significant available facilities in the area.

Other areas, near the seacoasts, could become sites for new Oceanographic Research and Development Institutes funded by the Federal Government. Mankind is still only at the threshold of a new era in which the riches of the ocean and the ocean floor can be captured for the benefit of all. The technological and engineering problems involved in such an effort are enormous, as is the task of protecting the ocean environment in its natural condition as this new era develops. Cities such as Orlando, Florida are not only conveniently located for such a program, but their proximity to aerospace centers would contribute to their growth area as principal scientific and technological centers in the United States. That in turn would attract high-technology industry.

To make jobs the Government could not make through its own programs, my Administration would go directly to leaders of the business community and urge them to locate new facilities in areas of high-technology unemployment. Business leaders are increasingly responsive to the need to consider the broad social implications of their actions. But White House leadership is necessary to help assist and guide them in making decisions of this nature.

The aerospace industry and the broader scientific, engineering, and technological community in America, continue to make a primary contribution to our national security and the quality of our lives. The recommendations I have made by providing adequate alternative demand for their services, while formulating a more rational policy of steady growth in the industry, would bring relief to the areas most seriously affected while long-range government demand for aerospace services begins to stabilize for the future.