



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona Legislature

Representative Justin Wilmeth (R-2)

Representative Michele Peña (R-23)

Senator Tim Dunn (R-25)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arizona Lawmakers Wilmeth, Peña, & Dunn Push for Yuma as Next U.S. Commercial Spaceport

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – State Representatives Justin Wilmeth and Michele Peña, along with Senator Tim Dunn, provided a letter of commitment to the Southwest Regional Aerospace Innovation Alliance’s pending application to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for funding to develop Yuma as the nation’s next commercial and industrial spaceport. The letter has been included in the Alliance’s proposal, which will be submitted along with its full application to the NSF. A copy of the lawmakers’ letter is attached.

“With the new Trump administration prioritizing spaceflight and economic expansion, Arizona is ready to play a leading role,” said Representative Wilmeth. **“House Republicans urge state and federal officials to support the Alliance’s NSF application, ensuring long-term investment in space exploration and economic growth. Arizona has an opportunity to help drive American innovation and prosperity.”**

Representative Wilmeth sponsored [HB2254](#) last year, establishing the Arizona Space Commission to attract and promote space commerce in the state.

“Yuma is the ideal location for the next spaceport, offering advantages unmatched by any coastal alternative,” said Representative Peña. **“With optimal weather, proximity to military and defense assets, pro-business policies, a skilled workforce, and exclusive launch directionality over the Sea of Cortez, it is the smartest and most efficient choice.”**

Creation of a Yuma-based spaceport would strengthen national security, boost economic growth, and drive advancements in space exploration. According to the Alliance, a Yuma Spaceport would generate \$2 billion in annual economic activity, create thousands of jobs, and establish a strategic hub for commercial space launches and innovation—consistent with advancing economic priorities outlined in the House Republican [Majority Plan](#).

“Yuma continues to be leaders in innovation,” said Senator Dunn. **“I ran the enabling legislation several years ago and am proud to support this collaboration and encourage its selection.”**

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Arizona State Legislature

1700 West Washington
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February 7, 2025

Via E-mail

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NSF Directorate for Technology, Innovation,
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U.S. National Science Foundation

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RE: Letter of Commitment for Southwest Regional Aerospace Innovation Alliance's Application Under the NSF Regional Innovation Engines Program to Establish a Yuma-based Spaceport

Dear Mr. Gianchandani,

We, the below signed members of the Arizona House of Representatives, respectfully submit this Letter of Commitment to support the Southwest Regional Aerospace Innovation Alliance's application for funding under the U.S. National Science Foundation's (NSF's) Regional Innovation Engines (NSF Engines) program and emphasize the reasons why selecting Yuma as the location for our nation's next commercial and industrial spaceport represents the ideal location for spurring regional innovation in the latest space launch technology, consistent with the goals of the NSF Engines program.

In 2019, Arizona passed House Bill 2423¹ to promote commercial space flight activities in Arizona "through the launch of stratospheric, suborbital and orbital missions" and to "promote the creation of space infrastructure in Arizona to increase economic development."

In 2024, Arizona passed House Bill 2254² establishing the Arizona Space Commission and Arizona Space Exploration and Aeronautics Research Fund to support the development of emerging technologies in human space flight, the development of a skilled labor workforce for commercial spaceflight and space commerce, and the development of infrastructure for establishing and maintaining a spaceport in Arizona.

This Commission and Fund utilizes experts with backgrounds in space economic development, space-related academic research, and nonprofit space economy support to bolster Arizona's innovative space ecosystem and compliment the efforts of the Southwest Regional Aerospace Innovation Alliance (Southwest Alliance) and NSF ESF Engines program.

¹ <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/54leg/1R/laws/0091.pdf>.

² <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/56leg/2R/laws/0140.pdf>.

Furthermore, we are committed to exploring and advancing future legislative initiatives that will further support the Yuma Spaceport's growth, enhance Arizona's leadership in aerospace innovation, and ensure the long-term success of the Southwest Alliance's mission.

If approved, the NSF Engines grant for the Southwest Alliance will do all of the following:

- Establish a Yuma-based spaceport to enhance national economic and national security interests.
- Advance critical commercial and industrial space launch technologies like small satellites.
- Advance environmentally friendly propulsion systems for space exploration, including hydrogen.
- Cultivate partnerships across commercial industry, military, and international partners.
- Equip the workforce with skills to meet demands in aerospace, defense, and satellite industries.
- Promote and stimulate approximately \$2 billion in annual economic growth in the region.
- Create 2,500-3,000 new jobs annually in aerospace, satellite, and defense industries.
- Provide a critical geographic location for commercial space launch access in an area that has historically been left behind.
- Help construct the spaceport and its infrastructure and develop a related downtown innovation district to be used for career development and R&D in space.

According to the Council of Economic Advisors, improving investors' expectations in a novel economic sector, like space, increases investment in that sector, leading to increased innovation and benefits. Supporting a flourishing commercial space ecosystem in the Yuma region through the grant of NSF Engines funding will therefore help to spur valuable competition in a region that has not yet had an opportunity to participate in the burgeoning private space launch industry amidst market incumbents like Vandenberg in California, Cape Canaveral in Florida, and Houston Spaceport in Texas.

Among these locales, Yuma represents the next frontier of public and private sector space launch operations and is an ideal location for mission-critical unmanned launches, particularly small satellite payloads for clients who are seeking crystal clear skies, minimal launch delays, and access to solar polar orbits from a currently untapped, underutilized, and undervalued location within the contiguous 48 states.

In 2019, the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation (GYEDC) received a grant to complete a feasible study, which determined that Yuma is an ideal location for rocket launches.

Choosing Yuma to engage in space launch operations provides all the following benefits, which are currently unparalleled by any other U.S. coastal option:

- Access to critical road and rail infrastructure via Interstate-8 and Union Pacific Railroad.
- Approximately 310 days of sunshine with no hurricanes or other substantive natural disasters (less than 20mm/year of annual rainfall) to delay critical launch operations, making Yuma the "sunniest city on Earth" according to the World Meteorological Organization and Guinness Book of World Records.
- Proximity to existing military and defense infrastructure and operations, including the Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, and Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range within 30-mile radius.
- Proximity to exiting aerospace and defense contractors and supply chain networks.
- World-class pro-business and pro-innovation tax policies, legal frameworks, and regulatory environments to provide certainty for investors, protection for workers, and unrestrained opportunity for innovators and entrepreneurs.
- Local green hydrogen fuel production capacity.
- International workforce development and skilled labor opportunities.

- Fewer wetlands and environmentally sensitive areas than other on-coast launch locations, reducing front-end regulatory roadblocks and back-end liability risks.
- Exclusive access to the only U.S. state that provides launch directionality over the Sea of Cortez.

With all launches being directed over the Sea of Cortez, adding the Yuma Spaceport to the ranks of Vandenberg, Cape Canaveral, and Houston will fill the last gap in the United States' southern space launch footprint and ensure, for the first time, that public and private sector actors can launch mission-critical payloads across all four equatorial aquatic bodies south of the border—including the Pacific, Atlantic, Texas Gulf, and Sea of Cortez.

Establishing this additional launch option in Yuma will therefore reduce congestion at existing launch locations while expediting launch scheduling timeframes, maximizing total launch capacity and frequency across the United States, and reducing costs compared to coastal launch alternatives.

In 2022, the city partnered with GYEDC to hire Launch on Demand, a consultant company based in Cape Canaveral, Florida, to complete the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) application process for a site license, which is currently ongoing.

We implore you to strongly consider the Southwest Alliance's candidacy for the NSF Engine's funds and to grant the southwest region the opportunity to add Yuma and the broader Sea of Cortez to the United State's arsenal of U.S. space launch options by supporting the establishment of a Yuma Spaceport in southwestern Arizona.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in support of the Southwest Alliance's application. Our offices are available for any questions or additional information.

Respectfully,



Justin Wilmeth
Representative, Legislative District 2
Arizona House of Representatives



Michele Peña
Representative, Legislative District 23
Arizona House of Representatives



Tim Dunn
Senator, Legislative District 25
Arizona State Senate