Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2019

The Honorable Heather Wilson
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Secretary Wilson:

We write today about recent reports that the Air Force is considering several locations in Colorado, California, and Alabama for reestablishment of U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM). Of the six reported finalists, we believe that Buckley Air Force Base (AFB) – and the vibrant, industrious, and growing Denver metropolitan area that surrounds it – is the 21st century home USSPACECOM deserves.

Buckley AFB represents the Total Force future identified by Air Force leadership as critical to maintaining an integrated and agile force. It is home to the 460th Space Wing, which provides global missile launch and tracking capabilities essential to defending the homeland. The 120th Squadron of the Colorado Air National Guard's 140th Wing is the only unit performing Aerospace Control Alert for the central region of the U.S. Additionally, the 223rd Space Group is the only mobile unit in the Air Force capable of providing survivable and enduring missile warning. These units are some of the more than 93 tenant organizations operating at Buckley. Together, they create a nexus of air, space, and intelligence assets that provide a unique set of critical mission capabilities.

Buckley AFB also houses the Aerospace Data Facility, Colorado (ADF-C). This multiagency, multiservice joint intelligence venture employs over 4,000 professionals – including 850 NSA personnel – to operate reconnaissance satellites, gather intelligence, and report back to civilian and military leaders. These professionals work around the clock, 365 days a year, to keep our country safe from evolving threats domestically and abroad. The existing workforce, operational infrastructure, and talent pool in and around Buckley AFB resulting from ongoing ADF-C operations will fully complement USSPACECOM's mission.

An installation with deep integration with the surrounding region would benefit the future USSPACECOM and the supporting community. The city of Aurora has previously received an award by the Air Force for their excellence in providing community support to the Air Force Space Command. The strong partnership between Buckley and the surrounding community is also exemplified by the award winning Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program. Since being implemented at Buckley, the REPI program has brought federal, state, and local partners together to mitigate the installation's impact on the environment and ensure that Buckley's units can continue their important missions in cooperation with local communities.

Buckley AFB is a regional hub for civil and defense space missions and assets, attracting private sector partners that include ULA, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Sierra Nevada Corporation, Boeing, Raytheon, Maxar Technologies, Harris, Ball Aerospace, and many more.

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The area is also home to more than 500 small- and medium-sized companies and suppliers that work directly or indirectly with the space industry. Together, these partners create manned and unmanned spacecraft, instrumentation, remote sensing, ground control, navigation services, and launch vehicles for NASA and other agencies. They have been integral in the success of some of the nation's most notable aerospace projects, including the development and launch of the next generation global positioning system, the GPS III, and the Insight Mars lander. Overall, the industry has a payroll of more than $3.5 billion and accounts for nearly $15.4 billion in economic activity annually and is a key economic, population, and knowledge driver in the region.

Colorado ranks first in the nation for its concentration of aerospace jobs, including 28,140 military personnel and 27,190 in the private sector both focusing solely on space. Buckley AFB supports a population of over 14,000 military, federal civilians, and contractors, and the base's location within a thriving urban center with a robust talent pool has facilitated an extremely well-educated, experienced, and service-driven workforce. Its proximity to first-rate educational institutions – including the University of Colorado System, the University of Denver, the Colorado School of Mines, and the Metropolitan State University of Denver – bolsters this case.

To be successful USSPACECOM will have to recruit and retain a high-quality civilian workforce. The Denver metropolitan area, including Aurora, boasts enviable quality-of-life metrics and transportation. It is ranked the number two place to live in the country by U.S. News & World Report, due to the strong job market and high quality of life, all of which make the area an ideal place to live, work, and raise a family. Buckley AFB is adjacent to E-470 – a major transportation artery in the Front Range – and near the Denver International Airport, the largest airport by area in North America and the fifth busiest in the United States by passenger traffic. Aurora is an ideal location to recruit and retain the experienced personnel needed to establish USSPACECOM and ensure its future success.

Buckley AFB is a critical Air Force asset in a thriving community that is already home to advanced space assets and hundreds of space-oriented businesses large and small. We have been performing the space mission for over 30 years. We are ready to continue leading space into the future and would welcome USSPACECOM openly.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter and welcome you to visit Buckley to see what the installation, Aurora, and the Denver metropolitan area have to offer.

Sincerely,

JASON CROW
Member of Congress

ED PERLMUTTER
Member of Congress

Commissioner Jeff Baker, Chair
District 3

Commissioner Nancy Jackson, Chair Pro Tem
District 4

Commissioner Kathleen Conti
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Commissioner Nancy Sharpe
District 2

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Wendy Mitchell, CEO
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Andrew Graham, CEO
South Metro Chamber of Commerce

Kevin Hougen, President and CEO
Aurora Chamber of Commerce

Robert LeGare, Mayor
City of Aurora
On behalf of the Aurora City Council