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GOP members use classic Democrat arguments to defend NASA spending in their districts

By [Chris Moody](#) - The Daily Caller 3:03 AM 07/01/2010

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In response to the Obama administration's decision to end a space exploration program intended to send humans back to the Moon and to Mars, Alabama Republican Rep. Robert Aderholt introduced a bill this week urging the president and NASA to keep the program afloat.

President Obama eliminated the budget for NASA's Constellation Program in February, calling the multi-billion dollar initiative "over budget, behind schedule and lacking in innovation." With Aderholt leading the charge, members of Congress from both sides of the aisle have come out in opposition to the president's decision, arguing that ending the program will cost American jobs.

"President Obama has been saying for years that the goal of his administration is to save or create American jobs," Aderholt wrote in an op-ed Wednesday defending his bill. "With the president's new proposal for NASA, he is doing just the opposite."

Not everyone is buying his line of reasoning. According to Tad DeHaven, budget analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, Aderholt is making the same argument that Obama made in defense of the stimulus, a massive spending bill passed earlier this year. Many of the Republican co-sponsors were critical of the president's suggestion that the government should spend to create jobs, and now they are adopting the same tactic to defend their own program, DeHaven said.

"That's a slam dunk example of hypocrisy," DeHaven said. "You can't criticize the idea that government should create jobs through stimulus programs and then go out and stop the elimination of an unnecessary over-budget space program just because it will save jobs in your district."

Aderholt's district is near the Marshall Space Flight Center, a major NASA facility. Many of the bill's co-sponsors represent districts that benefit from the space program and a review of their public statements revealed the Republican co-sponsors have been critical of Democrats who said the government could create jobs through spending — arguments they are now adopting.

"The best way to revive the economy is by halting this administration's reckless spending and big government expansion programs that have shaken investor confidence and stymied business growth," Alabama Republican Jo Bonner said in February. Many of the other Republican co-sponsors made similar statements about the inability of government action to spur job creation through spending, including Rep. [Spencer Bachus](#) and Rep. [Mike Rogers](#) of Alabama, Rep. [Michael Coffman](#) of Colorado and Rep. [Bill Posey](#) of Florida.

The bill's sponsors say they are being consistent in their support. Because space exploration is important to national defense, they argue, it falls into an entirely different category than other sectors of the

economy.

“Space is the 21st century military high ground and there is an important national security component that comes with our investment in space,” said Posey.

Aderholt contended that while the government spends too much, an exception should be made for important programs within NASA.

“There are a lot of government programs that need to be cut,” Aderholt said. “But when it comes to our defense and our space industry, I see them in a different category.”

While the proposed budget for the 2011 fiscal year eliminated funding for the Constellation program, the total budget for NASA rose by nearly \$276 million. In total, NASA will cost taxpayers \$19 billion in the next fiscal year.

Jacob Reses contributed to this report.

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