John F. Kennedy, Excerpts from "Urgent National Needs" speech to a Joint Session of Congress, 25 May 1961, Presidential Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

This is the section of President Kennedy's "reading text" of his address to a Joint Session of Congress in which he called for sending Americans to the Moon "before this decade is out." President Kennedy in his own hand modified the prepared text of his remarks. The text as written, modified, and ultimately delivered vary considerably. Kennedy also ad-libbed three additional paragraphs near the end of his speech.

To this end I soon shall send to the Congress a measure to establish a strengthened and enlarged Disarmament Administration. Such an agency can intensify and improve our studies and research on this problem, looking forward to the day when reason will prevail, and all nations of the world will be prepared to accept a realistic and safeguarded disarmament in a world of law.

IX. Space

Finally, if we are to win the battle for men's minds,

the dramatic achievements in space which occurred in recent weeks should have made clear to us all the impact of this new frontier of human adventure. Since early in my term, our efforts in space have been under review. With the advice of the Vice President we have examined where we are strong and where we are not, where we may succeed and where we may not. Now it is time to take longer strides -- time for a great new American enterprise -- time for this nation to take a clearly leading role in space achievement.

I believe we possess all the resources and all the talents necessary. But the facts of the matter are that we have never made the national decisions or marshalled the national resources required for such leadership. We have never specified long-range goals on an urgent time schedule, or managed our resources and our time so as to insure their fulfillment.

Recognizing the head start obtained by the Soviets with their large rocket engines, which gives them many months of lead-time,

and recognizing the likelihood that they will exploit this lead for some time to come in still more impressive successes, we nevertheless are required to make new efforts. For while we cannot guarantee that we shall one day be first, we can guarantee that any failure to make this effort will find us last. We take an additional risk by making it in full view of the world -- but as shown by the feat of astronaut Shepard, this very risk enhances our stature when we are successful. But this is not merely a race.

Space is open to us now; and our eagerness to share its meaning is not governed by the efforts of others. We go into space because whatever mankind must undertake, free men must fully share.

I therefore ask the Congress, above and beyond the increases I have earlier requested for space activities, to provide the funds which are needed to meet the following national goals:

First, I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth.

No single space project in this period will be more ~~exciting, or~~ more impressive, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish. ~~Including necessary supporting research, this objective will require an additional $531 million this year and still higher sums in the future.~~ We propose to accelerate development of the appropriate lunar space craft. We propose to develop alternate liquid and solid fuel boosters of much larger than any now being developed, until certain which is superior.

We propose additional funds for other engine development and for unmanned explorations -- explorations which are particularly important for one purpose which this nation will never overlook: the survival of the man who first makes this daring flight. But in a very real sense, it will not be one man going to the moon -- it will be an entire nation. For all of us must work to put him there.

Second, an additional $23 million, together with $7 million already available, will accelerate development of the ROVER nuclear rocket.

This ~~is a technological enterprise~~ in ~~which we are well on the way to striking progress, and which~~ gives promise of some day providing a means for even more exciting and ambitious exploration of space, perhaps beyond the moon, perhaps to the very ends of the solar system itself.

Third, an additional $50 million will make the most of our present leadership by accelerating the use of space satellites for world-wide communications. When we have put into space a system that will enable people in remote areas of the earth to exchange messages, hold conversations,

and eventually see television programs, we will have achieved a success as beneficial as it will be striking.

Fourth, an additional $75 million -- of which $53 million is for the Weather Bureau -- will help give us at the earliest possible time a satellite system for world-wide weather observation. Such a system will be of inestimable commercial and scientific value; and the information it provides will be made freely available to all the nations of the world.

Let it be clear that I am asking the Congress and the country to accept a firm commitment to a new course of action --

a course which will last for many years and carry very heavy costs -- an estimated $7-9 billion additional over the next five years. If we were to go only halfway, or reduce our sights in the face of difficulty, it would be better not to go at all.

Let me stress also that more money alone will not do the job. This decision demands a major national commitment of scientific and technical manpower, material and facilities, and the possibility of their diversion from other important activities where they are already thinly spread. It means a degree of dedication,

organization and discipline which have not always characterized our research and development efforts. It means we cannot afford undue work stoppages, inflated costs of material or talent, wasteful interagency rivalries, or a high turnover of key personnel.

New objectives and new money cannot solve these problems. They could, in fact, aggravate them further -- unless every scientist, every engineer, every serviceman, every technician, contractor, and civil servant involved gives his personal pledge that this nation will move forward, with the full speed of freedom, in the exciting adventure of space.