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This Week In Congress Radio Address: The Cost of NASA, 1959 June 5

Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear

Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on June 5th, 1959.

Mr. Kelly: ...DC, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Mr. Kelly. Further evidence of the soaring costs of our broadening advancements into the field of outer space was indicated last week in the Senate's approval of nearly half a billion dollars for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. By an overwhelming vote, the Senate approved legislation earlier passed by the House of Representatives to authorize appropriations for salaries and expenses, research and development, construction and equipment necessary to carry on this new science of the Twentieth Century. You will recall that last week, I commented on the proposed costs of the nation's agricultural program for the next fiscal year, which will total about four billion dollars. Great as it is, this amount will be far less than the sum necessary to sustain and advance our multiple activities into the almost infinite areas beyond the realm of our own planet. Rightfully, many people ask whether or not we should expend the funds required to carry on this ambitious program. Certainly, we do not know what the eventual results will be, for the scientific world is in reality only skimming the surface thus far in its efforts to probe the universe. Various persons have written me from time to time, emphasizing that our present economic and social needs are so great that all available resources should be utilized for these purposes rather than for experiments which, at present, are bringing limited and perhaps uncertain results. Of course, we know that the Soviet Union is pushing its space program vigorously, and that as a result, a crucial problem of national defense is involved. It would thus seem that we have no alternative but to carry on our activities to the fullest possible extent in order to stay abreast of, and if possible, exceed the successes of the Russian scientists. At the same time, we cannot overlook the fact that so far, we are making only what might be called the down payment on our future space program. And as we know, the down payment is usually only a small part of the total cost. Many members of Congress have weighed very carefully and diligently this question of obligating ourselves to almost unlimited expenditures for this new science while recognizing that many Earth-bound responsibilities remain unsolved. The inescapable conclusion reached thus far is that having committed ourselves to the start of this subject, we cannot now turn back. It is hoped that these

investments in outer space will bring a return not only in the protection of our national security, but perhaps discoveries and opportunities for advancing the level of civilization and making possible a more bountiful existence for everyone in the years ahead. We might sum up these thoughts by referring to a comment by a noted scientist, Wernher von Braun, who has said, with regard to the exploration of outer space, "It is utterly essential that we now commit ourselves and our resources, likewise, to a long-range, integrated national program, and sustain that program even if public interest in it temporarily abates. For if public opinion again becomes lethargic, it will, of course, be reawakened by Soviet accomplishments. The resultant stop-and-go method would be neither economical nor successful."

Mr. Kelly:

From the nation's capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time, speaking from the Senate Office Building in Washington.

[05:11]