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NEW MEXICO ADOPTS SPACE FLIGHT INFORMED CONSENT ACT

LAS CRUCES, NM – After unanimous passage by the state legislature, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has signed Senate Bill 9, Space Flight Informed Consent Act, recognizing the emerging commercial space industry and the inherent risks of space flight in New Mexico.

“This legislation secures New Mexico’s investment in Spaceport America and its resulting job creation by ensuring we are competitive with other Space States such as Virginia and Florida who have similar legislation in place,” said Governor Richardson. “This benefits the State and FAA Licensed Operators as well as the Participants. People who come to New Mexico for their flight into space will now be protected.”

The Spaceport Informed Consent Act, sponsored by Senator Mary Kay Papen (D-Las Cruces), requires space goers are fully informed of the risks of space flight prior choosing to engage in the activity. It was carried in the House by Rep. Kenny Martinez (D-Grants). This legislation will ensure the State of New Mexico and Spaceport America will remain competitive in the growing commercial space industry.

Steve Landeene, Spaceport America’s Executive Director, commented, “The passage of the Space Flight Informed Consent Act was critical to the success of Spaceport America and our ability to attract and retain commercial space companies to New Mexico. Any company taking participants into space must obtain a signed waiver where they acknowledge the inherent risks of spaceflight.” Landeene said that this protects New Mexico and the FAA-AST licensed operators like Virgin Galactic, but still allows legal options in cases of gross negligence

The Commercial Space Launch Amendment Act of 2004 established the framework for commercial space launch activity in the United States. The FAA-AST organization licenses operators and space launches, and specifically refers to people that choose to go to space as 'participants', not as 'passen-

gers'. This language recognizes the maturity level of commercial spaceflight in comparison to today's modern air transport systems and as such, the participants must sign consent prior to participating.

Construction of Spaceport America is well underway and is expected to be largely completed by the end of this year. Since construction began in August 2009, nearly 500 construction jobs have been created, with more on the way. Spaceport America has been working closely with leading aerospace firms such as Virgin Galactic, Lockheed Martin, Moog-FTS, and UP Aerospace to develop commercial spaceflight at the new facility. The economic impact of launches, tourism and construction at the Spaceport are already delivering on its promise to the people of New Mexico.

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For additional information and images of Spaceport America go to www.spaceportamerica.com or contact Rob Sharp @ 575-524-8118 or email: rsharp@wilson-binkley.com or david@wilson-binkley.com