

Editorial

Is Branstad the next bully governor?

Now that our eyes are unglued from the national political stage, following the Government Shutdown That Wasn't, let's focus our attention on Iowa for a moment.

The next legislative nail-biter is the current game of chicken among the Republican-controlled House, the Democratic-controlled Senate and Republican Gov. Terry Branstad.

In order for the Legislature to adjourn, which it's scheduled to do April 29, differences between state budget bills must be resolved. Disputes over the bills range from what to do with Iowa's preschool program to how to help boost the state's economy.

But perhaps the most fundamental issue is whether Iowa should approve a one-year or two-year state budget.

Branstad's message is that he will not accept anything other than a biennial budget. But that's not stopping the Senate from testing his limits.

The governor has said a two-year budget would allow the state to plan more efficiently. Democrats, on the other hand, worry about the ability to project tax revenue so far in advance.

There is some legitimacy to this, because the Revenue Estimating Conference has yet to release any numbers for fiscal year 2013.

We share the worry that implementing biennial budgeting in Iowa would take significant oversight from the Legislature and place it in the hands of the governor.

According to the Mason City Globe Gazette, Branstad recently said of any one-year proposals, "I'll veto it, and I'll veto it, and I'll veto it until we get a two-year budget and get the state on the right financial track."

This kind of attitude reminds us of what seems to be a growing trend among governors in the U.S. You can liken it to a surly teenager, who, after being told "no" by a parent, scowls and says, "I don't care what you say. I'll do what I want."

We've seen this from Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, who took negotiation off the table when he introduced anti-union bills in the Badger State.

The protests in Madison, Wis. have drawn the most media attention. But other states feel just as strongly that their governor is not listening. See Govs. Chris Christie, Rick Snyder and John Kasich for examples.

How much of this behavior can be attributed to the increased presence of a power-hungry governors with bullying tendencies — and how much of it indicates a trend in the way governors interact with legislatures and constituencies? And is Gov. Branstad on his way to becoming the next member of the "I don't care what you say, I'll do what I want" club?

If his history as governor can serve as an indicator, then probably not. But this is 2011, not 1991. So, here's hoping Gov. Branstad opts not to model his attitude after the bully governors that dominate the news of the day.

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Space



Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin was the first human to journey into outer space when his Vostok spacecraft completed an orbit of Earth on April 12, 1961. Courtesy photo: Wikimedia Commons

Honor exploration, wonder

By Rick.Hanton@iowastatedaily.com

Despite dangers, human spaceflight should continue

Fifty years ago today, humans first flew into space, the vast frontier beyond our home planet.

The first man in space was not an American, but a Soviet fighter pilot named Yuri Gagarin. He only flew one orbit of the Earth over about an hour and a half, but it was a giant leap for humanity and a feat that led to a great many technological advancements in the following years and decades.

A few friends of mine have been working for months on Yuri's Night 2011, a celebration of Yuri's flight as well as spaceflight in general that has happened every April 12 since 2001, when Trish Garner, Loretta Hidalgo — now a Yuri's Night Director and Zero-G Flight Director — and George T. Whitesides — now CEO and President of Virgin Galactic — set up the first series of parties around the world. This worldwide celebration marks both the first human spaceflight as well as the first flight of the space shuttle 20 years later in 1981. This year's celebration of the golden anniversary of human spaceflight will have the greatest number of parties yet. The event's website at yurisnight.net today lists more than 425 events in 70 countries.

One of these events will be right here on the ISU campus. The Iowa State Space Society and the Iowa State AIAA groups have teamed up to do a few exciting things Tuesday night to mark the anniversary of human spaceflight. The festivities include screening a brand new

movie about Yuri's flight, demonstrations from the Aerospace SSCL lab, an LED-lit night high-altitude balloon launch and late-night stargazing. If you want to find out more or to attend the event, click the link to the Facebook event listed with this article on iowastatedaily.com or simply stop by Howe Hall at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday.

This will be a special year for this event, as the reign of the space shuttle as America's premiere human launch vehicle is ending and a new era in spaceflight is beginning. We're still unsure what will happen during the coming years of human spaceflight. Some say that we shouldn't be flying humans into space when we could do the same work with robots like the Canadarm, Robonaut 2 or any of the other numerous probes and rovers humanity has sent out into the solar system and beyond. But I believe that human spaceflight will always have a place in our work to scientifically explore the world around us and expand the purview of human knowledge.

Just because it is dangerous to fly into and do experiments in space does not mean that we should stop doing them. It is just as dangerous to go explore the bottom of the oceans or the inside of a volcano, and yet scientists do this type of work every day.

Space exploration is just as important because it could be argued that even if we learned everything there is to know about the unexplored phenomena on our planet, there would be exponentially more knowledge to be gained among the other stars in our universe. Remember that if you stargaze on a clear, dark night, you will see thousands of stars, though

for each one of those stars, there are about 100 million other unseen stars in our Milky Way galaxy. Oh yeah, and there are another 100 million galaxies the size of our own.

Once the space shuttle is retired and the last orbiters take their places in various museums across the country — the list of museums to receive a shuttle will also be released April 12 — there will be multiple vehicles available that could take their place. Space Exploration Technologies of Hawthorne, Calif., is actively testing its Falcon 9 rocket and just announced the — also human capable — Falcon Heavy rocket that can loft twice the capacity of the space shuttle into orbit. The Boeing Company is working on development of a simple commercial capsule that could be launched on multiple launch vehicles to carry crew to the space station. The Sierra Nevada Corporation is working on the Dream Chaser to do the same job and based its space plane on a concept started and then dropped by NASA.

Congress, in a very anti-commercial way, is not especially keen on allowing private companies to provide NASA with transportation to and from the International Space Station or to loft NASA payloads to the moon or Mars. Many people I know have been trying to change this, but it is tough to sell NASA as a program that is more than a job program for congressmen and congresswomen's individual states.

Hopefully, the space industry's current state of flux will eventually resolve into a strong plan for scientific exploration and discovery and we will have even more to celebrate in 2061 on the 100th anniversary of human spaceflight.

Celebrate human advances

By Molly.Sturgis@iowastatedaily.com

Today marks 50 years of manned space exploration

Everyone is at least a little nerdy on the inside. Some of us nerdier than others, and some of us try to hide it, but we all are.

Not only should we accept that part of ourselves, we should embrace it and even be proud of it. Maybe this is a new idea, as of yet unexplored, for you.

Well, fortunately, there is an opportunity to embrace that nerd in the form of a large social event.

This evening, Tuesday, is Yuri's Night. Now, you might wonder, who is this Yuri and why do we have a night to celebrate him?

Yuri Gagarin was a Soviet cosmonaut, and exactly 50 years ago he left earth's atmosphere and became the first man in space. Exactly 30 years ago, the United States and NASA launched the first space shuttle to start that program.

Exactly 10 years ago, Yuri's Night became an international holiday celebrating human space exploration. This year, on the 50th anniversary of the start of human space exploration, Yuri's Night is being celebrated in more than 70

countries and on every continent except Antarctica.

That's right, you can't escape it. We nerds are everywhere.

At the beginning of the space race, in 1957, Sputnik had just been launched. The USSR successfully put a man — Yuri Gagarin — in orbit first, as well, and it became apparent to everyone that America was losing. Here's what most citizens, both Americans and Soviets, didn't know: the Soviet space program was not that awesome, but instead was made up of brave men who willingly stepped into flying death traps.

Space is not safe and never will be, but for the sake of deadlines and a race, a lot of corners were cut. They traded quality for quantity and never admitted defeat. If there was a launch scheduled and it failed on the launch pad, they simply told people that they had postponed the launch, and photographs were edited to cut cosmonauts out as if they had never existed.

The United States space program wasn't perfect, either. Corners were still cut, sometimes for the sake of deadlines, and lives were also lost. However, the main difference was, if you were a voice

of dissent here, nobody would ship you off to Siberia.

A story just came to light that, to me, exemplifies the Soviet program at that time. It is the story of the death of Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the communist revolution, a space mission was being hastily planned and constructed. Komarov was assigned to this mission.

Yuri and a team of technicians inspected the space vehicle and found more than 200 structural problems, and Yuri himself wrote a document about it, recommending the mission be delayed. Nobody would pass it to those higher in command, however, as anyone who read the document suddenly was fired and/or had to take an unexpected trip to Siberia.

Komarov knew it was dangerous and that he would likely die, but he refused to step down, as the replacement cosmonaut would have been his good friend and, at that point, national hero, Yuri Gagarin.

The morning of the launch, Yuri apparently showed up and demanded to be put in instead of his friend. Komarov was still the one sent. As expected, there were 1,001 things wrong with the

vehicle, and Komarov never made it back alive.

Ignore for a second how depressing that story was. Cosmonauts and astronauts have always been brave men and women who know the risks and are willing to take them. They are people who are fascinated with space and what is beyond the atmosphere. They are people who boldly go, who exemplify the spirit of human exploration in all its forms.

That is something worth celebrating. It is worth celebrating the countless advances the human missions to space have made in everyday life. It is worth celebrating the advances humans have made and the advances we will continue to make. It is worth celebrating how cool space is and how nerdy we are.

If you're interested in celebrating any of this, which you should be, come join the local Yuri's Night celebration hosted by various aerospace engineering groups. It will be at Howe Hall from 5:30 p.m. to midnight, maybe longer, and will include movies, food, launching of a high altitude balloon, paper airplane competition and stargazing. Come meet others who are interested in celebrating awesome.