

**Open Letter to The White House concerning SETI**  
**Petition to Restore NASA SETI Funding**  
**by Tobias Daniel Wabbel, Germany**

The President of the United States of America  
The Honorable William Jefferson Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20501

Dear President Clinton:

The discovery of what may be fossils of microbiological life on Mars, which you announced to the public on August 7, 1996, has rekindled popular interest in the momentous question of whether humankind is alone in the universe. We are writing to urge that the federal government restore its support of a program that - though modest in scale and inexpensive to operate - could answer that question.

The project is SETI, the search for extraterrestrial intelligence. Inaugurated on October 12, 1992, NASA's SETI program ranked as the most thorough effort ever made to search the skies for radio signals from nonhuman civilizations. Because there are so many stars - several hundred billion stars in our galaxy alone - astronomers calculated that years of searching would be required before a signal was acquired, even if hundreds of worlds are emitting radio beacons that our equipment can detect. For that reason, NASA had planned to fund the SETI program through at least the year 2002. At a cost of only \$12 million per year, SETI was a scientific bargain. But, sadly, funding was cut to zero in September 1993, when the SETI radiotelescopes had been listening for less than one year. Since then it has run at a reduced level, under the auspices of Project Phoenix, Project Argus, and other privately funded searches.

Mr. President, a NASA SETI project can capture the public imagination, reaping educational benefits to our young people far out of proportion to its bargain-basement cost. It can help draw imaginative, visionary individuals into the space agency, building on the estimable efforts in that direction already undertaken by you and the NASA administrator, Daniel Goldin. And of course, should it succeed, contact with an extraterrestrial civilization would constitute the most spectacular discovery in the history of humankind.

Therefore, we the undersigned urge that you restore government SETI funding in your next budget.

Very truly yours,

- Stephen Jay Gould, Anthropologist, Harvard University, USA
- Philip Morrison, Astrophysicist, SETI pioneer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA
- Paul Horowitz, Radio astronomer, Project BETA, Harvard University, USA
- George Greenstein, Astrophysicist, science writer, Amherst College, USA
- Dennis Overbye, Science writer, New York Times, USA
- James Gleick, Science writer, New York Times, USA
- Jack McDevitt, Science fiction writer, USA
- Allen Tough, Social Scientist, University of Toronto, Canada

- Jerry R. Ehman, Discoverer of "Wow!" Signal, Ohio State University Radio Observatory, USA
- Robert S. Dixon, Assistant Director, Ohio State University Radio Observatory, USA
- Geoffrey W. Marcy, Astronomer, discoverer of extrasolar planets, San Francisco State University, USA
- R. Paul Butler, Astronomer, discoverer of extrasolar planets, San Francisco State University, USA
- Dan Werthimer, Radio astronomer, Project Serendip, University of California, Berkeley, USA
- Gero von Randow, Science writer, Die Zeit, Hamburg, Germany
- Kunitomo Sakurai, Astrophysicist, Japan's SETI expert, President of the University of Yokohama, Japan
- Greg Bear, Science fiction writer, USA
- Brian W. Aldiss, Science fiction writer, England
- Timothy Ferris, Science writer, co-author of the Voyager Records, San Francisco, USA
- Claudio Maccone, Astrophysicist, Turin, Italy
- Arthur C. Clarke, Science fiction writer, Sri Lanka
- Stelio Montebugnoli, Director of the Medicina radio observatory, director of the first European SETI program, Project Starvoice, Italy
- Andrea Maccaferri, Particle physicist, Institute for radioastronomy, Bologna, Italy
- Alessandro Cattani, Particle physicist, Institute for radioastronomy, Bologna, Italy
- Monari Jade, Radio astronomer, Institute for radioastronomy, Bologna, Italy
- Alessandro Orfei, Radio astronomer, Institute for radioastronomy, Bologna, Italy
- Nicolo D'Amico, Radio astronomer, Institute for radioastronomy, Bologna, Italy
- Bonnie Gordon, Editor, Astronomy Magazine
- Ann Druyan, Science writer (Pulitzer prize), co-author of the Voyager Records
- James S. Trefil, Physicist, science writer
- David Brin, Science fiction writer, USA
- Ben Bova, Science fiction writer, USA
- Richard C. Factor, President, The SETI League Inc., USA
- A. Heather Wood, Secretary, The SETI League Inc., USA
- H. Paul Shuch, Executive Director, The SETI League Inc., USA
- Tobias Daniel Wabbel, Petition initiator, Science fiction writer, initiator of the European SETI program Project Starvoice, Germany