

entirely safe.

Ernie Sluss

Orleans

Restructure NASA

To the editor:

After the Challenger Shuttle disaster in 1986, a commission was formed to investigate that accident. Among the commissioners were General Donald Kutyna and the late and famous physicist and Nobelist Richard Feynman (he was the one who identified the O-rings as the culprit). Kutyna and Feynman mutually respected each other and experienced frustration serving on that panel. Here's what the general said after the damning report from the committee investigating the recent Columbia accident: "They (NASA) have not learned a damn thing."

Manned space flight is dangerous and incredibly costly. NASA grossly underestimates the dangers and oversells the science. With all due respect to the brave members of the Columbia crew, the oft-touted science of that mission was no more impressive than good high school science projects. Contrast that with the unmanned Voyager probes that taught us much about our solar system and far exceeded expectations. So too with the unmanned missions exploring the cosmic radiation background — the aftermath of the Big Bang. The wonderfully successful Hubble telescope could have been launched by conventional rockets and even replaced (if necessary) at far lower cost than the manned missions to fix it.

NASA needs a major restructuring, a change in management and a new mission. The first moon landing of 1969 followed by the safe return was a truly awesome feat and probably worth the costs and risks. But it was not science driven. In the future science and society will be much better served by unmanned space probes.

Alex R. Dzierba

Bloomfield

Drug war not working

To the editor:

I am disappointed in the amount of time and money the government is still consuming in the "War on Drugs." Tommy Chong was convicted of conspiring to sell drug paraphernalia?! I am sick to death of public money financing the right wing "Head-in-the-Sand" fascist morons. The amount of money that is being flushed down the toilet by law enforcement and the various departments of correction is staggering. There isn't a government agency that isn't in some type of money crunch in this country. The conservatives are always up in arms about how much money the government is spending. It seems to me they can't wait to spend all kinds of money on solutions that have proven to be inadequate. Until people have the courage to admit when something isn't working and move on to something that does, we will continue to have the same problems.