

RFF's Compelling Future

I write this letter, my first as Resources for the Future's president, with a range of emotions. I am thankful for RFF's prior stewards, and I am honored and excited to lead this institution, with its remarkable heritage and a mission more vital than ever. Yet I am also saddened by the deep loss we recently suffered upon the death of RFF's Vice President for Research Molly Macauley.

RFF's former president Phil Sharp successfully connected RFF's research to important societal decisions, and I have personally appreciated his counsel. RFF also owes a deep debt of gratitude to Linda Fisher, vice chair of RFF's Board of Directors, who served as the institution's interim president this summer and provided leadership at a crucial moment.

At a time when polarization and superficial rhetoric dominate public discussion, RFF provides balanced, data-driven research and analysis to support the decisions required for a thriving environment, economy, and resource base. The landmark advances that have emerged from this institution continue to inform our public policies as well as business and individual decisions in fundamental ways. Given the critical national and global challenges we now face, if RFF didn't already exist, someone would have to create it.

RFF derives its strength from its purpose and its people. From its inception to the present day, RFF has been home to people of the highest quality and integrity, working diligently to make the world a better place. One of those people was Molly Macauley.

Molly died tragically in July. Her death is a tremendous loss for RFF, on both institutional and personal levels. The same holds true for many communities outside of RFF, especially her friends at NASA and from the broader space policy community, the

National Academy of Sciences, and Johns Hopkins University.

Molly was a pioneering economist, bringing the orientation of a resource economist to an area that needed it: space policy. She recognized that our use of space is subject to the same types of resource constraints as canonical global public goods, such as the oceans and atmosphere. The insight is classic Molly: creative, sharp, and pragmatic. Her specific contributions include research on orbital debris, space risk management, and the value to society of information from near-Earth observation.

She was a frequent contributor to *Resources*, and we include excerpts of a number of her articles in a tribute in this issue. We also have collected remembrances from Molly's friends and colleagues, although this issue is not large enough to contain the outpouring in the weeks since her passing. Some others can be found at www.rff.org/rememberingMolly and in a special online issue of *Space Policy*.

As noted by Dick Schmalensee, chair of RFF's Board of Directors, Molly's unshakable belief in RFF's mission, work, and people was "both inspiring and contagious." As we work to make RFF an even more impactful institution, we go forward inspired by Molly's example. In that spirit, I also welcome your ideas for innovating and growing RFF, in collaboration, so that together we can strengthen both our environment and our economy. ●



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