OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
An Overview of the Administration's Federal Research and Development Budget for Fiscal Year 2013

February 17, 2012

Dr. Holdren, thank you for joining us today. I know it's been a busy week with the late release of the budget just coming out on Monday. As the President's Science Advisor and as Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, you are in a unique position to have a real and tangible influence on the Administration's direction in science and technology, so we appreciate you being here to discuss the Administration's R&D priorities and to answer our questions. Today's hearing obviously will cover a great deal of ground, so I will try to be brief with a few points before we hear from you.

All told, this budget is not much different than your previous budget, so you will understand that my remarks are not much different than the ones I made last year.

Our national debt a year ago was just over $14 trillion dollars. Our debt today is nearly $15.4 trillion dollars, and our Nation's budget deficit has increased by 190 percent between 2008 and 2012. In his three years of office, President Obama has accumulated more debt than every President from George Washington to Bill Clinton combined, and yet the budget we received earlier this week asks for an additional $3.8 trillion, or 23.3 percent of GDP. This level of spending is simply not sustainable, and to be perfectly blunt, it's not creating jobs, growing the economy, or improving the lives of the American taxpayer.

I continue to believe that while it is true that prudent investments in science and technology, including STEM education, will almost certainly yield future economic gains and help create new jobs of the future, it is also true that these gains can be hindered by poor decision-making. Hard-working Americans expect and deserve better. With our unemployment still hovering above 8 percent, they expect us to reduce or eliminate those programs that are duplicative and wasteful and examine ways to advance *real* job creation and economic growth, not just spend their hard-earned money on what the government assumes is best for them. The budget before us today makes a lot of assumptions about what is best for the American taxpayer.

American ingenuity will determine our future. The President said in his recent State of the Union address that "Innovation…demands basic research." And he is right; however, blanket increases even for our federal science agencies are not the same as prudent investment and do not guarantee innovation. As stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, we must curtail runaway spending and prioritize programs that lay the foundation for entrepreneurial success, and we must do that without picking winners and losers.

All of the agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction, with the exception of NASA, receive modest increases in the FY13 request. In better economic times, I could support such increases, but even then, I would demand that those investments be prudently made. The increases in this budget are devoted mainly to new, unproven programs or provide significant increases in those areas that are, in my opinion, making assumptions for the American taxpayer.

I remain concerned that a disproportionate amount of the increase to the FY13 R&D budget, at least as it pertains to a majority of the agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction, is directed toward climate change, reducing resources available for higher leverage investments. This continued focus for the federal government's limited research dollars slows our ability to make innovative and perhaps life-altering advances in other equally, if not more important, disciplines. The National Science Foundation, DOE's Office of Science, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are all funding remarkable research that seeks to improve the way we live our lives. While we should continue to study our changing climate and continue to work towards keeping our air and water clean, we must closely examine the billions being spent on climate change programs with an eye toward effectiveness. To date, we have already spent $40 billion with nothing to show for it. We are drowning in red ink, and we need to better prioritize and direct limited R&D dollars to areas that drive innovation and economic growth.

I also want to reiterate my disappointment with the President's budget as it relates to other energy and environmental policy. The budget doubles down on DOE's expensive and troubled green energy programs while flat funding priority basic research at the Office of Science and cutting R&D aimed at advancing traditional domestic energy exploration and production. Meanwhile, the President delivers a wink and a nod to EPA as it continues to regulate affordable energy out of existence, often on the basis of shaky and secretive and faulty science. These efforts contribute to higher energy prices throughout the economy, and represent misplaced priorities that I hope and expect Congress will reject.

And lastly, with regard to NASA, contrary to the favorable treatment received by the bulk of our government's civil R&D endeavors, NASA seems to have been singled out for unequal treatment. No matter that its top-line number is virtually the same as this year's funding, NASA's science enterprise suffers a 3.2 percent reduction, with the Planetary Sciences taking a grossly disproportionate cut of 20 percent, bringing to a conclusion for the foreseeable future one of the agency's most exciting and visible science programs. Further, this budget continues to slow-roll development of a new heavy-lift launch vehicle. The NASA Authorization Act of 2010, signed into law by the President, stipulated that the Space Launch System and the Orion crew capsule be used as a back-up capability for supplying and supporting the International Space Station (ISS) crew and cargo requirements. Instead, NASA is pacing development of these systems to be operational in 2021, which could occur after ISS retirement. America's continued leadership in space, and even our national security, depends in large part on developing and maintaining this critical capability. I cannot stress enough the importance of accelerating this launch system to ensure we have an alternative method to transport people and cargo to ISS as well as the ability to launch missions beyond lower earth orbit.

Dr. Holdren, we remain open to working with you as we move forward, but respectfully ask that you take the message back to the President that to say that we continue to have significant concerns with his priorities for our Nation's precious and limited research and development dollars is a vast understatement.