

COMMITTEE ON
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND
TECHNOLOGY**
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)
NASA's FY2016 Budget Request

Chairman Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate Administrator Bolden's testifying today. While there are some areas of agreement between the Committee and the Administration in this budget, the president's request regrettably changes agreed-upon national priorities.

The President's request puts NASA in a tough position because it ignores his own sequestration levels and fails to identify offsets for increases of \$500 million. It is hard for Congress to consider this a serious proposal when it does not comply with the law and is not grounded in reality.

I also disagree with the Administration's continued attempt to redistribute funding within NASA. For example, Europa is one of the best destinations we have in our own solar system for finding life beyond our planet. Yet this year's request of \$30 million for the Europa mission is disappointing considering the mission's potential.

In contrast, Congress has funded a Europa mission at \$75 million, \$80 million, and \$100 million over the last three years. Missions like this, as well as the search for exoplanets and signs of life in other areas of our universe, captivate the American people.

I appreciate the progress, on the other hand, that has been made with other priorities such as the James Webb Space Telescope, the Transitioning Exoplanet Survey Satellite, and the Wide Field Infrared Space Telescope.

Overall, though, there is a lack of balance in the overall science account request. Congressional guidance and the decadal surveys advocate for a balanced portfolio of science activities. Unfortunately, the President's request does not adhere to that recommendation by the space experts.

One of the most glaring examples is the disproportionate increase in the Earth Science Division that it receives at the expense of other science divisions and human and robotic space exploration. There are 13 other agencies involved in climate change research, but only one that is responsible for space exploration. In the last eight years, the Earth Science Division funding has increased by more than 63 percent.

This year, the Administration requested another increase of \$175 million over last year's levels for a total increase of nearly \$2 billion. The administration doesn't even come close to funding other science divisions at this level.

The planetary science budget request is 43 percent lower than the earth science budget request. Also, the Earth Science request is almost as much as the Astrophysics division, the James Webb Space Telescope, and the Heliophysics Division combined. This is anything but a balanced portfolio. These increases come at the expense of NASA's high-priority exploration systems, which the White House has once again attempted to raid to fund the Administration's environmental agenda.

The budget underfunds the Space Launch System and Orion programs. And it cuts human spaceflight programs by almost \$400 million. The Obama Administration seems to have forgotten NASA's priorities – and the main one is space exploration.

This budget also continues to request funding for the uninspiring Asteroid Retrieval Mission (ARM), which was recently rebranded the "Asteroid Retrieval and Redirect Mission." The Administration continues to push this mission on NASA without any connection to a larger exploration roadmap and absent support from the scientific community or even NASA's own advisory committees.

This is an uninspiring mission without a realistic budget or destination. It has no certain launch date or ties to existing exploration goals. It is a mission that is without the consensus necessary to make it a reality in the 18 months remaining in the Obama administration.

The Administration continues to starve NASA's exploration programs to fund a partisan environmental agenda. NASA simply deserves better.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

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