



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Brian Babin (R-Texas)

An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for Fiscal Year 2017

Chairman Babin: The first and perhaps most important point I want to make today is that NASA is a worthwhile investment for the taxpayer and our nation. Space is as important to our future as were the frontiers of land, sea, and air that we faced in the past. NASA's mission to explore outer space and to use outer space for the benefit of our nation and mankind is an endeavor worthy of our great nation.

NASA as an agency, its employees, and contractors deserve our praise. I represent the 36th district of Texas, the home of the Johnson Space Center. I can say from personal experience talking with the folks at Johnson that regardless of the budgetary and policy differences in Congress or within the Administration, they are passionate and dedicated to NASA's mission.

Unfortunately, this Administration has once again done a disservice to NASA, its employees, and our nation by providing a budget request that ignores the budget agreement, requesting mandatory funding for NASA. I had hoped that the Administration would demonstrate leadership by proposing a realistic budget, but instead we were presented with a list of unfunded priorities.

The Administration has also once again disregarded the priorities of previous bipartisan NASA funding bills that the President signed. For example, even if we include the so-called mandatory budget request, the budget proposal cuts the Space Launch System (SLS) and Orion crew capsule by \$840 million and the Planetary Science Division by \$133 million. Without the mandatory funding, SLS and Orion are cut by \$1 Billion. Planetary Science is cut by \$261 million. This is not acceptable. This is a budget that takes our human spaceflight program nowhere fast. This budget undermines our space program and diverts critical funding to lower priority items.

I have been, and continue to be, concerned that the support in Congress and at NASA for the SLS and Orion programs is not matched by the Administration. The Administration consistently requests large reductions for these programs despite the insistence of Congress that they be priorities. Orion and SLS are strategic national assets and must be sufficiently funded.

Proposed cuts to the Planetary Science Division are equally distributing. The pipeline for outer-planet missions has been woefully under-prioritized. It is critical that our nation maintain a robust outer-planet exploration program.

Already the effects of this diminished cadence are being felt. To keep their staff employed, planetary science institutions increasingly seek funding from foreign space agencies to compensate for the lack of projects. This results in transference of valuable skills and knowledge out of the United States to countries like China. Experienced planetary scientists are also transitioning to other fields while young scientists are choosing not enter the field, gutting our national capacity in planetary science.

It is important that NASA maintains a balanced portfolio of science activities. Unfortunately, year after year, this Administration has requested disproportionate increases for earth science activities, activities that are already funded by more than a dozen other federal agencies. This year, the President's proposal seeks to increase the Earth Science budget by \$111 million, a six percent increase. This amounts to a 70 percent increase since 2007. If this money had been put toward our human spaceflight program, we wouldn't be spending hundreds of millions on Russian launch services.

The request also dilutes NASA's existing earth science research portfolio by conducting other agencies' work. It is developing climate sensors for NOAA, and land imaging capabilities for USGS. While NASA certainly has the expertise to do this work, they don't have the budget or the requirements. NOAA is tasked with maintaining operational climate measurements, and USGS is tasked to maintain Landsat measurements.

This budget makes NASA the piggy bank for other agencies. That must end. If NASA is tasked to do other agency's work, it should do so on a reimbursable basis as it does successfully for other programs such as the Joint Polar Satellite System, and the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite System.

Our nation has been spacefaring since 1958, only fifty-eight years. While we have accomplished great things in these fifty-eight years, there is so much more to learn, to discover, and to put to practical uses for the benefit of our nation and mankind. But we as a nation will not be leading this journey unless we adequately fund NASA's human spaceflight and planetary science missions. Other nations, such as China, are working adamantly to become the global leader in space exploration. The consequences of America getting it right or wrong are not immediate, but they are enormous. The rules are going to be made by those countries that are on the surface of the Moon and Mars, not those that stayed home.

I thank Administrator Bolden for his testimony and look forward to a robust discussion.

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