



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Research and Technology Hearing:
A Review of the National Science Foundation FY 2020 Budget Request
May 8, 2019

Thank you Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Baird for holding this hearing to review the National Science Foundation budget request for fiscal year 2020. And thank you Dr. Còrdova and Dr. Souvaine for being here this morning. It is good to see you both again.

The National Science Foundation, during its nearly 70-year history, has played a critical role in promoting our economic prosperity, national security, and the health and wellbeing of our population. It should come as no surprise that nations around the world, including some of our rivals, have attempted to replicate NSF in their own governments.

That is why I'm so dismayed that the budget that has been sent over by the White House proposes to cut NSF by a \$1 billion. A cut like that would keep us from funding excellent research and slow progress in critical areas of technology development. Unfortunately, this is a pattern we've seen from this White House over the past three budget cycles. To make matters worse, the recent shut down of much of our government for 35 days, including the National Science Foundation, resulted in delays for 2,000 grant applications. While that may seem minor to some, delays in grant funding derail academic careers, sometimes permanently. Increasingly, U.S. students and early career researchers are packing up for better opportunities abroad or leaving STEM altogether.

I have no doubt that we have the brainpower in this country to continue to lead, but not if we chase away our own best and brightest and close our doors to the best and brightest from around the world. I am an optimist, but I also recognize the sobering realities of increasing competition, a growing skills gap, and crumbling research infrastructure. We also gain from international collaboration, and other countries investing more in R&D is overall a good thing. However, we must maintain our own investments to reap the benefits of collaboration and protect our economic and national security interests.

Some of my colleagues will say this is just a proposal and Congress has the final say in the budget. However, until Congress acts, the agency and researchers can only plan according to

what's in the Administration's proposal. Moreover, Congress itself has become too comfortable with passing one short-term continuing resolution after another, and that has done harm too.

Tomorrow morning this Committee will hold its first hearing since 2010 assessing the state of diversity in STEM. The NSF budget proposal includes \$168 million in cuts to NSF's investments in broadening participation. The Administration proposes to eliminate the STEM Partnerships Program and significantly cut the Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program. These proposed cuts are included despite this Administration prioritizing diversity in its recent government-wide STEM strategic plan. A commitment to addressing our nation's challenges must involve more than just words.

Dr. Córdova, I do not question your commitment, nor the commitment of the talented, hard-working staff across the National Science Foundation. I know you did your best with a very challenging top line. But we cannot just keep pretending year after year that everything is going to be okay because Congress will restore NSF's funding. As the months tick by between now and then, more students and researchers across our nation will lose hope that the United States is still the best country in the world to be a scientist. Our nation's leadership, on both sides of the aisle, must provide the support our students and researchers need to apply their knowledge and talents to the betterment of our society. I truly hope, going forward, we can do better than we have been.

I look forward to the testimony and discussion and I yield back.