



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

April 29, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith
House Committee on Science,
Space and Technology
2321 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steven Palazzo
House Committee on Science,
Space and Technology
2321 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Smith and Palazzo:

On behalf of the Association of American Universities (AAU), an organization of 60 leading public and private research universities in the United States, we are writing to provide our views on the NASA Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017. For the last 60 years, NASA has enjoyed tremendous support from both Congress and the American public. As the Committee prepares to mark-up authorizing legislation, we strongly encourage you to consider NASA’s importance to the nation’s research enterprise and to provide real and sustainable funding increases for NASA’s missions and the scientific and engineering research that undergirds them.

As the world’s premiere space agency, NASA has been integral to advancements in human spaceflight and exploration, space science, aviation and aeronautics research, and space technology development. We recognize that the overly tight caps on discretionary spending imposed by the Budget Control Act (BCA) make it difficult to provide the investments in research that are needed to advance the nation’s innovative capacity and global competitiveness. Nevertheless, we are concerned that the NASA Authorization Act makes steep cuts in some areas of science in order to bolster funding in other areas. Given the complementary goals and activities of the directorates, adequate funding for all the directorates is necessary for NASA to operate effectively and to successfully achieve its mission.

The fact that the NASA authorization bill includes aspirational funding levels – levels that would go into effect should the BCA be repealed – demonstrates your interest in supporting NASA’s mission directorates. We are concerned however, that the bill proposes a reduction in authorized funding for the Science Mission Directorate (SMD) – a directorate that supports vital research in Earth Science, Planetary Science, Astrophysics and Heliophysics. The scientific and engineering research supported by SMD and performed by scientists, researchers, and students at the nation’s research universities are absolutely essential to the entire space agency. Unfortunately, neither the aspirational nor constrained budget proposals reach the current level of funding.

For FY2015, SMD received an appropriation of \$5.2 billion. The authorization bill proposes \$4.9 billion for the directorate under the aspirational budget and \$4.6 billion for the directorate under the constrained budget. For NASA’s Earth Science program, there are steeper funding cuts proposed in the authorization bill as compared to the current level of funding – an 18 percent cut under the aspirational budget and a 32

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- Indiana University
- Iowa State University
- The Johns Hopkins University
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- McGill University
- Michigan State University
- New York University
- Northwestern University
- The Ohio State University
- The Pennsylvania State University
- Princeton University
- Purdue University
- Rice University
- Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- Stanford University
- Stony Brook University –
- State University of New York
- Texas A&M University
- Tulane University
- University at Buffalo –
- State University of New York
- The University of Arizona
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Davis
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, San Diego
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- The University of Chicago
- University of Colorado, Boulder
- University of Florida
- University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- The University of Iowa
- The University of Kansas
- University of Maryland, College Park
- University of Michigan
- University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
- University of Missouri, Columbia
- The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Oregon
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Rochester
- University of Southern California
- The University of Texas at Austin
- University of Toronto
- University of Virginia
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin - Madison
- Vanderbilt University
- Washington University in St. Louis
- Yale University

percent cut under the constrained budget. Similarly, for the Space Technology directorate, the authorization bill proposes essentially flat funding under the aspirational budget and a 16 percent cut under the constrained budget. The proposed authorization for the Aeronautics Mission directorate is 14 percent below the FY2015 appropriations level of funding. Therefore, we urge the Committee to reconsider the proposed cuts to SMD, Space Technology, and Aeronautics directorates.

Despite our concerns about authorization levels, we would be remiss not to acknowledge and thank you for recognizing the importance of funding small, medium, and flagship missions and for underscoring the value of activities such as research and analysis grant programs, technology development grant programs, and suborbital research activities. Moreover, your strong support for participation by undergraduate and graduate students in NASA-sponsored research missions is extremely appreciated, as is your support for the National Space Grant College and Fellowship program.

Thank you for considering our views. In the spirit of previous NASA authorization bills, we welcome the opportunity to work with you to improve the bill, so that it can garner bipartisan support in the Committee and House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hunter R. Rawlings III". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Hunter R. Rawlings III
President
Association of American Universities

cc: Members of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee