

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*H.R. 2039, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2016 and
2017*

Full Committee Markup

April 30, 2015

Thank you Chairman Smith. Just a little over two months ago we marked up and passed out of the House a bipartisan NASA Authorization. That bill was negotiated on a bipartisan basis, and voice voted out of the Committee and the House.

Apparently, the Majority doesn't like to proceed with that much efficiency and bipartisanship, because here we are, just two months later, with a completely different approach. The bill before us today wasn't pre-negotiated with the Minority. In fact, nobody on our side had seen the bill until the markup was noticed last Friday. Moreover, we didn't even find out about the Majority's intention to hold a NASA markup this week until the day the markup was noticed.

After we saw the bill, we understood why.

In contrast to the bipartisan bill from February, H.R. 2039 abandons the tradition of a well-balanced NASA portfolio in pursuit of ideologically driven cuts to programs the Majority doesn't like.

Most significantly, Majority's bill cuts earth science by over 320 million dollars. Earth science, of course, includes climate science. It should come as no surprise that the Majority wants to cut funding for a field of science where they are scared of the answers the scientists give. Remember, just last week, every single Republican Member of this Committee voted against the notion that climate change might be caused by people.

In January, NASA announced that 2014 was likely the warmest year since 1880. NASA also noted that 9 of the 10 warmest years have occurred since 2000. Of course, these scientific findings did not sit well with my Republican colleagues who have been consistently insisting of late that global warming is over. Instead of admitting that they might be wrong, the Majority is doing the next best thing: cutting the budget of the scientists who keep making them look so foolish. This is an embarrassment, and does a profound disservice to the once-proud reputation of this Committee.

The Majority also cuts the Aeronautics budget by 80 million dollars, which is consistent with the President's request. I must say that for the life of me, I can't understand why either the Majority, or the President for that matter, is proposing to cut this account.

The last time I checked, aviation equipment is one of the last major positive contributions to our trade balance that America still has. We are the world leader in both commercial and military aviation equipment. But this leadership is in jeopardy as other major world powers focus their industrial efforts on this sector.

This is not the time to turn our back on aeronautics research. This research will help to keep our aviation industry the world leader, and improve the quality of life of our citizens.

Mr. Chairman, these are ill-advised cuts. These cuts have absolutely nothing to do with making America safer or stronger. Nothing. They are simply the expression of the Majority's stick-your-head-in-the-sand ideology.

This is especially disappointing because we had worked so hard just three months ago to make our NASA authorization a bipartisan bill which could be broadly supported by the aerospace and science community. It's a shame to be throwing all that work away in pursuit of a narrow ideological agenda.

I'm going to close with a warning. There are those in this country, and in this Congress, who don't think NASA should be a priority. NASA has survived and thrived over the years only because of the strong bipartisan backing of those who understand the importance of NASA to our national wellbeing.

The bill before us will never become law. But the Majority's willingness to walk away from bipartisanship in order to appease their own most ideologically driven Members, risks eroding support for NASA in general. This, I fear, will be one of the most unfortunate consequences of the Majority's actions.

Before I yield back, I'd like to place some letters and statements into the record from organizations that have echoed concerns about the bill, including: the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Geophysical Union, Geological Society of America, the Association of American Universities, the American Astronomical Society, Universities Space Research Association, and the Planetary Society.

I yield back.