



Office of the Chancellor
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

April 30, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for your leadership in advancing a reauthorization of NASA for Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017. Texas A&M has long been involved with the space agency, and we would like to share our thoughts on the legislation.

We know that the Committee faces a very tight budget environment. So, we are particularly pleased that the draft prioritizes NASA by offering an aspirational budget that increases funding for the agency in both fiscal years. We recognize that NASA is primarily a mission agency, and we appreciate your strong commitment to human space flight. Our partnership with NASA is very important to us as a Space Grant university, and this is seen by the fact that a large number of Texas A&M graduates pursue careers with NASA, especially at the Johnson Space Center. We are proud to see how many Aggies at NASA are working on the Orion program. Further, we frequently partner with NASA to help advance research in a broad spectrum of areas including autonomous rendezvous and docking on small satellites, intelligent multifunctional materials, and aerothermochemistry.

We also strongly support the bill's increased funding for planetary sciences and astrophysics. Researchers at Texas A&M are working on space challenges such as the use of remote sensing data to determine properties of the current atmosphere on Mars by studying dust content, heating effects of the dust, and processes that lift, transport, and settle the dust. Our astronomers partner with NASA and other astronomers around the world to study carefully selected distant galaxies similar in mass to the progenitor of our own Milky Way. For these reasons, we agree with the Committee that planetary sciences and astrophysics are critical to continued discovery. In that vein, we do feel it is important that we maintain preeminence in aeronautics, as those technologies have fueled many important innovations in materials, propulsion, and hypersonics. Likewise, earth science research is critical to understanding earth

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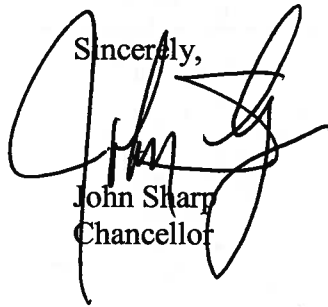
Page 2

observation for weather phenomena, such as hurricane prediction. Therefore, we urge the Committee to work towards increasing these budgets as the process moves forward.

As NASA prepares for many exciting current and future missions, Texas A&M is committed to providing NASA, and our nation broadly, with a well-educated STEM workforce. We are proud to partner with NASA on several education initiatives, such as the NASA Strategic Education Alliance program. In this program, our faculty work with NASA to translate the excitement of space exploration into a meaningful, relevant educational experience which can trigger interest in STEM careers for the next generation of new explorers. We are pleased to see that the Committee increases funding for the Education Directorate above the President's FY 2016 budget request, and we also support language in the bill to keep STEM activities closely tied to the mission directorates.

Thank you again for bringing this critical reauthorization forward. Few things capture our nation's imagination more than space exploration. We share your enthusiasm for science and discovery, and we look forward to continuing to work with you as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Sharp', is written over the typed name and title.

John Sharp
Chancellor

cc: The Honorable Tommy Williams
Vice Chancellor for Federal and State Relations

Scott Sudduth, Esq.
Director, Federal Relations