

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 15, 2025

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Commerce, Justice, Science, and
related agencies Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng
Ranking Member
House Commerce, Justice, Science, and
related agencies Subcommittee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Cole and Rogers and Ranking Members DeLauro and Meng,

We write to urge the Appropriations Committee to include clear, protective language for NASA in the anticipated Continuing Resolution (CR) later this month. Without inclusion of an anomaly providing guidance on the NASA budget, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has pledged to apply its proposed FY 2026 cuts as soon as October 1st. That would result in an unprecedented, single-year cut to NASA, particularly NASA's space science activities, resulting in irreversible impacts on America's space leadership and capabilities that ignore congressional intent.

We are grateful for your continued leadership in advancing a Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill that prioritizes stability and full funding for NASA. This legislation supports important capabilities in breakthrough space science, research, and exploration. Your work provides a strong foundation as Congress considers next steps for NASA funding in the weeks ahead.

Yet, OMB seemingly intends to implement the President's Budget Request (PBR) on October 1st, regardless of this clear congressional intent during any upcoming CR. For an agency like NASA, a budgetary interruption of this magnitude would be devastating and poses a number of serious concerns that will affect every state and nearly every congressional district. If left unaddressed, OMB's plans to enact the PBR will:

Create needless disruption and uncertainty. NASA invests in projects that span years and, in some cases, decades. To make most of the taxpayers' investment, NASA requires reliable funding over time to ensure projects stay on-track and on-budget. Drastic cuts made by the budgeting office rather than a considered policy process creates uncertainty that threatens project timelines, risks unanticipated budget growth, and potentially wastes billions of dollars of prior

taxpayer investment. Your Committee wisely rejected these program reductions during the appropriations process.

Throw away billions of dollars of functioning spacecraft. The OMB budget proposes to terminate nearly 20 active space science missions, all of which, due to American ingenuity and workforce skill, have exceeded their original design lifetimes. These projects have been subject to rigorous outside review to ensure their continued value, and represent unique capabilities that would take decades to restore, including spacecraft currently at Jupiter, Mars, and at the edge of our solar system. These collectively reflect an estimated \$12 billion of prior taxpayer investment, not including annual operating costs.¹ And once turned off, they cannot be easily restored, if at all. These mission terminations would also incur significant close-out costs that would be an additional burden carried by the taxpayer. These cancellations were largely rejected by the Committee's CJS bill.

Weaken national security. Development of space missions for NASA has always provided dual-use technologies that bolster the nation's security. Understanding the Sun's influence on life on Earth can help save lives in combat when space-based communication is the only option.² Using a spare mirror from the National Reconnaissance Office allows the workforce building the Nancy Grace Roman Telescope to hone their skills with hyper-sensitive space-based observatories.³ Operating Juno at Jupiter allows satellite operators to better understand "how space systems can survive and even reverse degradation from exposure to intense radiation."⁴ Exploratory science provides irreplaceable opportunities to push the nation's technological limits and demands precision, resilience, and skills that help secure the nation's future.

Stifle the space economy. The capabilities and ambitions of America's commercial space sector are the envy of the world, and represent a historic new chapter in spaceflight that has unleashed American ingenuity. However, the reality is that the government, primarily NASA, remains the anchor customer for the majority of these new services,⁵ providing critical early funding and long-term servicing contracts necessary to leverage private investment and build out this new market. Many companies compete to provide components and expertise to new NASA initiatives. Scaling back our investments in space exploration, as proposed by the OMB, would stifle this nascent industry. The committee has thankfully addressed this issue in its appropriations legislation.

¹ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-8GAxFqBUStyUUK7Dv25SnfSX_y2PxulUet2fsJw69Y/edit?usp=sharing

² <https://www.jhuapl.edu/news/news-releases/241022-space-weather-national-security>

³ <https://www.nasa.gov/missions/roman-space-telescope/primary-mirror-for-nasas-roman-space-telescope-completed/>

⁴ <https://bigthink.com/starts-with-a-bang/nasa-needlessly-kill-juno-mission/>

⁵ <https://apps.bea.gov/scb/issues/2025/03-march/0325-space-economy.htm>

Surrender space leadership to China. Our nation is facing major competition from China, and not just to return humans to the lunar surface. It is a multi-front competition to make the next great scientific discoveries about the cosmos. But if OMB has their way, NASA will be forced to turn off our only spacecraft operating at Jupiter, a probe traveling far beyond Neptune, multiple space-based telescopes peering into the depths of our universe, and a reconnaissance craft already en route to investigate a 340-meter diameter potentially-hazardous asteroid named Apophis, among more than a dozen other missions that have already been paid for by the taxpayer.⁶ And, missions to return the first samples from Mars, to directly map Earth-like worlds around other stars, and to enhance our understanding of the Earth and its interactions with the Sun would be stalled if the PBR were enacted October 1st. This is the field on which the race to lead the world in scientific discovery will take place, and China has an ambitious roadmap to pursue these and more efforts in space exploration in the next two decades.⁷ Retreating now would preemptively hand over global leadership in science and innovation to others.

The threats posed by these cuts are clear, and Congress has already advanced legislation to reject them. But now, Congress must act to prevent OMB from playing games with NASA's budget.

To ensure NASA adheres to congressional intent, we urge that any short-term CR include clear guidance to continue NASA projects and programs at the currently enacted funding level until Congress fully deliberates and finalizes FY 2026 appropriations. Shutting down active and in-development projects cannot easily be reversed, delays in research funding will result in layoffs and the loss of future workforce capacity, and the NASA community has already faced staff cuts and funding delays earlier this year. **Congress should require NASA apportionments to continue at a rate commensurate with FY 2025/2024 and prevent OMB and NASA from prematurely making dramatic programmatic changes absent the input and consent of Congress.**

NASA has always been one of the best returns on the taxpayers' investment, generating over \$75 billion in economic activity per year⁸ and inspiring generations of scientists, entrepreneurs, and explorers. Known the world over, NASA is an American brand synonymous with innovation, leadership, and excellence in the face of near-impossible odds. NASA embodies America's role as a nation that leads in exploration and discovery. And all for a fraction of overall federal spending (less than 0.35% today) that has been steadily declining to now less than half what it was at the beginning of the 21st Century. We risk permanently falling behind the competition if we are not careful stewards of our space program.

We therefore respectfully ask the Committee to include language in the CR explicitly protecting NASA funding at no less than the FY 2024/2025 enacted levels. Congress has acted before to

⁶ <https://www.planetary.org/articles/scientists-behind-threatened-nasa-missions-explain-whats-at-stake>

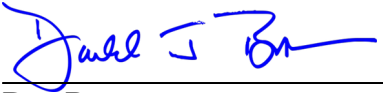
⁷ <https://payloadspace.com/op-ed-space-science-is-part-of-the-space-race-with-china/>

⁸ <https://www.nasa.gov/fy-2023-economic-impact-report/>

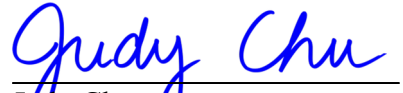
protect essential programs under CRs, and NASA – a vital part of our economy, our national security, and our global standing – deserves the same protection.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request. We stand ready to work with you to ensure NASA continues to deliver for the American people.

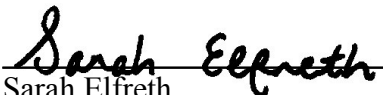
Sincerely,



Don Bacon
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



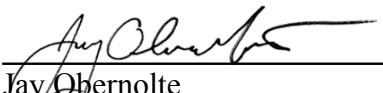
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