



The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

28 April 2015

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

On behalf of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and its more than 60,000 Earth and space scientists, I would like to elucidate our position regarding the value of Earth science at NASA and voice our opposition to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017 as the bill is currently written.

AGU recognizes the proposed four percent increase for planetary science, as compared to Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations, and appreciates the support for this vital field of study, even under difficult budgetary restrictions. However, we are extremely concerned that the reauthorization significantly cuts funding for NASA's Earth Science Division – with cuts ranging from 18 percent, if budget caps are lifted, to 32 percent, if the caps are kept in place.

The priorities of NASA's Earth Science Division are based on decadal surveys conducted by the National Academy of Sciences' Space Studies Board to determine consensus among scientific experts on the most critical leading-edge scientific areas of research over the next decade. While policy language in the bill endorses the National Academy of Science's Earth Science Decadal Survey and directs NASA to implement a program that is consistent with its recommendations and priorities, the proposed funding cuts make achieving this mandate highly improbable.

The research performed and supported by the division helps us understand the world we live in and provide a basis for knowledge and understanding of natural hazards, weather forecasting, air quality, and water availability, among other concerns.

The applicability of these missions cannot be overstated given their impact on your constituents.

Earth science within NASA provides a broad array of benefits and applications across the

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public and private sectors. In the wake of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, NASA's UAVSAR project allowed response teams to track the movement of the oil into coastal waterways and assisted in monitoring the impact and recovery of affected areas along the Gulf of Mexico. MODIS, an instrument on NASA's AQUA satellite, helps monitor dangerous algal blooms that have decimated the economies of coastal communities.

More generally, Earth Science Division missions aid in flood prediction, earthquake response, and the tracking of severe storms and tornadoes. Greater knowledge and prediction skill are urgent when we consider the effort, time and costs of protecting infrastructure along coasts, rebuilding fish populations, managing water resources for manufacturing and agriculture, and restoring communities in the wake of hazards. These observations, and many others like them, are integral and require the vantage point of outer space.

The purpose of AGU is to promote discovery in Earth and space science for the benefit of humanity. Even with the support for NASA's Planetary Science Division, we oppose the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017 as the bill is currently written because of the significant proposed cuts to the Earth Science Division. We urge you to modify the legislation and set forth a vision commensurate with recommendations from the scientific community that truly empowers NASA to seek new knowledge and understanding of Earth, our solar system, and the universe.



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