



UNIVERSITIES SPACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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April 29, 2015

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The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

Thank you for your strong support of NASA, as indicated in the proposed National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act for 2016 and 2017. On behalf of USRA's 105 member institutions, thank you for your leadership on space-related issues and your efforts to authorize NASA's programs and initiatives for the next two years.

I write to urge you and your colleagues, on both sides of the aisle and in both houses of Congress, to join together to authorize full funding for NASA science and technology development that ensures a robust, comprehensive, and healthy U.S. space program.

Our civilian space program binds together extraordinary missions and programs. We explore our solar system with robotic spacecraft, peer into space with telescopes that reveal the beginnings of the universe, observe our Earth from orbiting platforms, pioneer cutting-edge aeronautics research, and conduct small missions that engage and train students at our universities. Our astronaut corps defines the American can-do spirit, and our space program touches every American.

The NASA science portfolio comprises inspiring missions that are visible throughout the world. The faculty and students at our universities, including undergraduates, are engaged more than ever in these science missions. The efforts of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology have ensured that the NASA science portfolio has remained healthy and balanced. For fiscal year 2015, the House of Representatives voted to restore funding from a requested level of \$4.97 billion to \$5.19 billion and, in the enacted fiscal year 2015 appropriation, to \$5.24 billion. The proposed authorization for fiscal years 2016

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and 2017 that the Committee will consider tomorrow, however, would reduce NASA's authorized funding for its science programs to \$4.95 billion. I am concerned that this reduction would have a deleterious effect on U.S. universities engaged in space-related research and education. I ask you to find a way forward to authorize a fully funded NASA science portfolio, as you and the Congress have steadfastly done in the past.

Funding for space technology is also a key area directly affecting our nation's universities and their efforts in STEM-related workforce development. These universities have historically worked alongside NASA as partners in their science missions. The newly formed Space Technology Mission Directorate is opening up university involvement in engineering fields, engaging the creativity of our students and faculty in NASA technology development. Some of this university engagement is bringing disruptive innovation to the benefit of NASA and our aerospace industry. I urge you to fully support this new directorate, which recognizes NASA's role in advancing technology for our nation—a role that NASA has fulfilled historically and which has now been restored through bipartisan efforts.

I am copying the Chair of our 105-member Council of Institutions, and the members of our Issues and Program Committee, which is composed of representatives from each of USRA's nine geographic regions. Please call upon any of us with questions on this or any other matter on which we could assist.

Sincerely,



JAI/cmc

cc:

Prof. Robert H. Holzworth (University of Washington), Chair, USRA Council of Institutions

USRA Issues and Program Committee:

- Prof. Patricia H. Doherty (Boston College), Region I
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