

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Research & Technology
*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Science Foundation
for Fiscal Year 2017”*
March 22, 2016

I want to thank Chairwoman Comstock for holding this hearing to review the fiscal year 2017 budget proposal for the National Science Foundation.

The National Science Foundation Act of 1950 remains one of the most important, and wisest, pieces of science legislation produced by Congress. That Act established the guiding principles for the agency that would become a central enabler of U.S. leadership in science and technology.

The National Science Foundation Act laid out the overall management structure and responsibilities of the agency. It stipulated that NSF should award scholarships and fellowships. It described collaboration with other agencies and other governments. It listed ways in which NSF might seek input from outside experts, including through the National Science Board.

Perhaps the most important feature of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, a very deliberate feature, was that it left it in the hands of the scientific experts - at the agency, on the Board, and in the community - to determine the scientific priorities and to fund the best science across all fields. With that authority, the Foundation developed a system for setting priorities and a process for awarding grants that remain the envy of scientific communities the world over. While Congress has amended and updated the 1950 Act many times, as is our responsibility, we have been wise enough to leave intact the founding principles of the agency that have served this nation so well for more than 65 years.

The fiscal year 2017 budget proposal under review today reflects just how essential an agency the National Foundation has become during those 65 years. It speaks to the importance of the Foundation in expanding our knowledge of the universe, of our own world, and of humankind. It also speaks to the role of the Foundation in addressing our national challenges, whether they be economic growth, national security, environmental security, or society's overall health and wellbeing. Interdisciplinary initiatives such as Understanding the Brain; Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Water, and Energy; and Risk and Resilience represent the future of scientific and technological problem solving.

The National Science Foundation is also a leader in STEM education and workforce preparation. I am interested to learn more about how the NSF Research Traineeships (NRT) program will be integrated with select cross-agency research initiatives. I also look forward to hearing about

progress on the INCLUDES initiative for broadening participation in STEM, in addition to the major undergraduate STEM education effort underway and the Computer Science for All initiative.

I am pleased to see the Regional Class Research Vessels in the Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction budget for FY 2017, since that was identified as a top priority in the 2015 Decadal Survey of Ocean Sciences.

While the increase in the proposed agency operations and award management budget request may look high in comparison to the increases for the research and education accounts, it is essential that we provide the National Science Foundation with the resources to effectively carry out its management and oversight responsibilities. We must also fully fund the FY 2017 request for the new agency headquarters. Any further delay next year due to lack of funding will just cost us more in subsequent years.

I thank Dr. Córdova and Dr. Arvizu for their service to our nation, and I look forward to their testimony.