



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

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of the Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics

Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee Hearing
From Detection to Deflection: Evaluating NASA's Planetary Defense Strategy

May 15th, 2025

Good morning, and thank you Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing. I want to extend a warm welcome to our expert witnesses. Thank you for being here.

Under most circumstances, this hearing would be a natural continuation of the Committee's periodic review and oversight of NASA's near-Earth object and planetary defense activities, activities that Congress—led by this Committee—directed in law. Near-Earth objects, or NEOs, pose real, though infrequent, threats.

We had a taste of a NEO threat in late 2024 and early 2025 with the detection of the 2024 YR4 asteroid that was initially estimated to have a more than 1 percent chance of impacting Earth in 2032. Thankfully, NEO and planetary defense efforts—both in the U.S. and internationally—were in place to analyze and assess the threat, and the projection was later reduced to near zero. Today's circumstances, however, are far from ordinary.

The Trump Administration's recently released "skinny" FY 2026 budget request proposes a \$6 billion or 24% cut to NASA. NASA's Science Mission Directorate, which oversees and funds NASA's NEO and planetary defense activities being discussed today, would see a staggering 47% cut from the FY2025 levels under the full-year continuing resolution. While we are still awaiting the more detailed budget proposal in the Congressional Justification, one thing is clear. This budget, if enacted, would strip away NASA's storied leadership, disrupt decades of progress in U.S. space exploration, and cripple the agency's ability to pursue bold and ambitious goals going forward. That would be a sad and hollow future for our civil space program. It would be an embarrassing recipe for failure, and one we must wholeheartedly reject. It also risks jeopardizing U.S. global leadership across the science and technology frontier and in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, with drastic cuts being proposed across the federal science ecosystem.

Since taking office, the Trump Administration has cancelled nearly \$20 million dollars in NSF research grants to my State. These federal cuts also threaten the livelihoods of our local communities and are leading already to job losses in my District, North Carolina's Fourth. The depths of losses for NASA would be far reaching, impacting everything from support to the

International Space Station to aeronautics research and development, which advances aerospace and aviation, a sector with historically positive trade balance, and so much more.

NASA's Earth Science Division would take a billion-dollar hit, threatening the continued Earth observations and information that can help our farmers estimate crop yields and assist emergency responders in preparing for and responding to natural disasters, for example. The tornados, droughts, flooding, wildfires, and hurricanes that ravage communities like recently in my home state of North Carolina are neither Red nor Blue; however, this Administration has chosen to kneecap our ability to understand, predict and respond to these devastating—and expensive--disasters. For example, hundreds of scientists slated to work on the statutorily-directed National Climate Assessment have been dismissed, and a NASA support contract for the U.S. Global Change Research Program was cancelled. These actions are unrecognizable in an agency that has been the gold-standard and world leader in space and has achieved historic results characteristic of our great nation.

If enacted, the Trump Administration's "skinny budget" proposal risks putting NASA on a path to irrelevance. It threatens our economic and national security, surrenders U.S. leadership in space to our adversaries, and jeopardizes our competitiveness and standing on the world stage. That's a strategic posture I simply cannot accept. There is only one choice before us. We must preserve NASA's ability to inspire the next generation, and to lead in all of its science divisions, aeronautics, low Earth orbit, and to the Moon and beyond. We can only do so if we work together to provide NASA with the necessary direction and resources, and I commit to doing just that.

I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, and my colleagues on the Committee to continue our bipartisan legacy of ensuring a strong, stable, and bold future for NASA.

Thank you, and I yield back.