

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

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Space

*“An Overview of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Budget for Fiscal Year
2018”*

June 8, 2017

Good morning.

I join the Chairman in welcoming you, Mr. Lightfoot. We look forward to your testimony. NASA is fortunate that an individual as experienced as you is serving as Acting Administrator.

This is the first budget proposal of the Trump Administration, and relative to the ill-considered funding cuts to science in other Federal R&D agencies, the request of about 19.1 billion dollars for NASA can be considered good news.

That said, what concerns me is that the priorities represented in this Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal for NASA appear to weaken the efforts Congress has taken to put NASA on a strong and stable footing. In particular, it would cut over a half billion dollars from the funding that Congress appropriated for NASA in the Fiscal Year 2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act. And it would shrink NASA’s purchasing power significantly over the five-year budget horizon at a time when NASA is striving to meet several major milestones in the 2018 timeframe, including

- The launch of the James Webb Space Telescope;
- The certification of two U.S. space transportation systems for carrying crew to the International Space Station; and
- The first test flight of the integrated Space Launch System and the Orion crew vehicle.

Cuts to NASA’s budget will not make the challenges of meeting these milestones any easier.

But what really puzzles and upsets me is why an agency whose mission is to inspire would attempt to eliminate the Office of Education, and for no good reason? Foundational NASA education programs such as Space Grant, EPSCoR, and MUREP are simply terminated in this budget request. That is a sad indicator of the priorities represented in this Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposal.

The same can be said for the proposal to cut five Earth science missions and to reduce funding for future Earth science research grants. We need more data and research to understand and address changes to our Earth system, and in particular, our climate, not less.

Mr. Chairman, while I appreciate that the top-line budget proposal for NASA is a good start, it is clear that we on this Committee and in this body, have work to do to ensure that we continue to set NASA on the strong and stable path that the Congress established with the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations and the NASA Transition Authorization Act.

I never tire of reiterating that NASA is a crown jewel of America's research and development enterprise. It advances knowledge, promotes technological innovation, projects a positive image of America throughout the world, and inspires. Its workforce is dedicated and accomplished. NASA deserves our support.

I look forward to working the Administration, with you, Mr. Chairman, and with this Committee to do just that.

Thank you and I yield back.