

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 18, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Acting Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space  
Administration  
300 Hidden Figures Way, SW  
Washington, D.C., 20546

Dear Acting Administrator Duffy,

We write to ensure no actions are taken at NASA to implement the proposed funding cuts in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget Request for NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) during FY2025, encourage or effectuate actions to meet the proposed workforce reductions in the FY2026 budget request, or otherwise preclude the continuation of NASA's science programs of record as constituted in FY2025 until Congress enacts full-year appropriations for FY2026 through September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

While we support the Administration's stated goals to ensure U.S. leadership in space, the Administration's own FY2026 budget proposal does not. The extensive damage that the proposed cuts to NASA Science would inflict underscore the vital importance of maintaining NASA's existing programs, as funded under the full-year FY2025 continuing resolution, until Congress acts on the Administration's FY2026 budget request.

We are particularly concerned about alleged internal actions at NASA that could set in motion the proposed FY2026 cuts prior to Congress acting on an FY2026 appropriation for NASA. For example, NASA has reportedly asked leaders of some operating science missions to prepare close out plans and "should 'assume closeout is complete within 3 months.'"<sup>1</sup> Administration actions to impede Congress's constitutional authority cannot go unchecked. We expect you, in your role as Acting Administrator, to ensure that any effort to implement proposed FY2026 cuts to NASA Science or to align NASA Science programs and projects in the current fiscal year 2025 with the FY2026 proposal be stopped immediately.

NASA's SMD supports over 100 missions operating or in development, ranging from Earth observation satellites to deep space probes. These missions are not only foundational to enhancing our understanding of the universe and our own planet but also represent billions of dollars in prior taxpayer investment. Cuts as deep as those proposed by this Administration—47% to NASA Science—would force the premature termination of dozens of productive missions, wasting decades of effort and taxpayer investment. Under the steep cuts proposed for SMD, which includes astrophysics, heliophysics, Earth science, planetary science, and biological

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Berger, "White House works to ground NASA science missions before Congress can act," *Ars Technica*, July 1, 2025. Available at: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2025/07/trump-administration-moves-to-tighten-the-noose-around-nasa-science-missions>

and physical science divisions, the Administration's proposal would not only terminate existing missions but would also preclude the start of or delay indefinitely ambitious and high-priority science recommended in the National Academies decadal surveys. This would create a future void of U.S. space science and ground-breaking discoveries that have defined NASA's success.

The proposed cuts to NASA Science in the FY2026 budget request are cause enough for significant concern. However, the prospect of actions to implement these damaging cuts during the current 2025 fiscal year is even more alarming and would stand in direct violation of Congress' role. As a reminder, it is Congress who holds constitutional authority of power of the purse.<sup>2</sup>

There is much at stake. NASA's strength and its science mission have implications for America's geopolitical, economic, and national security interests. If ultimately enacted, the FY2026 proposal would represent an historic setback with far reaching consequences for U.S. research, industrial capabilities and educational opportunities all of which would cede our global leadership in space and Earth science to adversaries such as China and jeopardize America's envied standing in the world for decades to come. However, actions to put the FY2026 proposal into practice prematurely would not only be unlawful, they could also circumvent actual Congressional direction for FY2026 appropriations for NASA and how such appropriations are legally required to be spent, a process that has already started in the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and that indicates Congressional intent to reject much of the Administration's proposed FY2026 cuts to NASA Science.

NASA's science missions drive the development of new technologies, support a robust STEM workforce, and inspire and help train the next generation of scientists and engineers. The proposed funding cuts to SMD (not to mention the FY2026 request's proposal to zero-out NASA's Office of STEM Engagement, including the Space Grant College and Fellowship Program) would disrupt this STEM pipeline. These reckless cuts would undermine opportunities to grow the pool of skilled talent needed to ensure America's future competitiveness in critical sectors and emerging technologies, including quantum and artificial intelligence, and would risk eliminating pathways, especially for students and early-career researchers, that feed the STEM pipeline.

Internationally, NASA's leadership in space science has fostered valuable partnerships and cemented U.S. influence in global scientific collaboration. These partnerships have enabled NASA to carry out more ambitious missions than it could conduct independently and provided the U.S. scientific community with access to data from a global fleet of space missions. Abandoning major missions in operation or under development—such as the Atmospheric Observing System, the VERITAS mission to Venus, and the Chandra X-Ray Observatory—as proposed in NASA's FY2026 request, would not only waste billions already spent but also damage relationships with our international partners who could look elsewhere to replace once-critical U.S. commitment and expertise. U.S. scientists could also lose out on opportunities for participating in non-U.S.-led missions should international partners chose to step away from partnering with the U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> *United States Constitution Article. I, § 9, cl. 7.*

Moreover, a 53% cut to Earth science, as has been proposed in the FY2026 request, would limit the collection of essential data that NASA's Earth science missions provide for understanding climate change and environmental trends that directly affect our economy and national security. The scale of reductions to NASA Earth science would also severely impair the use of Earth science data and research to improve our ability to forecast, manage, and respond to natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and wildfires, leaving the nation less prepared for the challenges of the future and impacting local communities' abilities to adapt and respond to severe weather and natural disaster events.

Science, our STEM workforce, and international partnerships would not be the only losers from the draconian cuts proposed to NASA Science. The U.S. could also lose the industry capabilities and unique skillsets needed to develop instruments and spacecraft that meet NASA's demanding requirements for science and other NASA missions. In turn, weakening the industry supply chain that provides components and systems for NASA's science missions could also affect the broader U.S. aerospace supply chain, including civil, commercial, and national security space sectors.

The proposed cuts in the Trump Administration's FY2026 request for NASA Science have been condemned by a broad coalition of scientific societies, industry groups, and advocacy organizations, all warning of "immediate and irreparable damage" to the nation's space science enterprise. In a letter recently sent to Congress, leading national stakeholders including the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), the Commercial Space Federation (CSF), the Coalition for Deep Space Exploration (CDSE), the Planetary Society, and others pointed out that "a 47% reduction to NASA Science would represent a surrender of American leadership in a domain it has long defined ... at a time when other nations, notably China, are increasing their space science capabilities and cadence, such a self-inflicted wound would cede our hard-won leadership."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, a letter from the Aerospace Industries Association (AIA) stated that "a 50 percent reduction in NASA's science funding would severely hinder the United States' ability to lead in groundbreaking scientific discoveries, such as searching for new life forms in deep space," further adding that "ongoing efforts to reduce the federal workforce, combined with these cuts, threaten thousands of highly skilled jobs and may push America's brightest minds to seek opportunities overseas."<sup>4</sup>

As Members invested and charged in oversight of NASA, we are working to prioritize robust, stable and consistent funding for NASA's science programs. Protecting these investments is essential for maintaining America's leadership in discovery and innovation, and for continuing the support for NASA throughout history that has been bipartisan and popular with the American public.

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<sup>3</sup> [\*Letter Addressed to the Leadership of the Authorizing Committees with Oversight Over NASA\*](#)

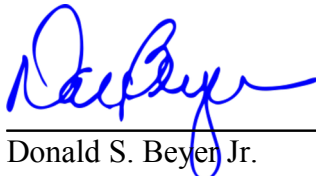
<sup>4</sup> [\*AIA FY26 Civil Space Programs Letter\*](#)

We look forward to working with you to ensure NASA has the resources and funding necessary to advance American leadership in space and maintain preeminence in space science and exploration.

Sincerely,



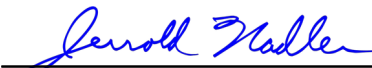
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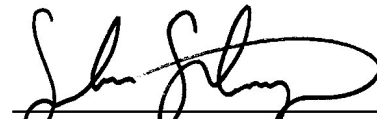
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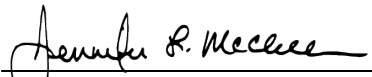
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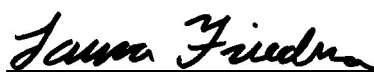
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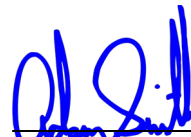
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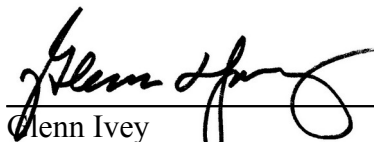
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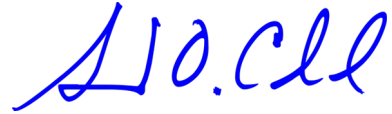
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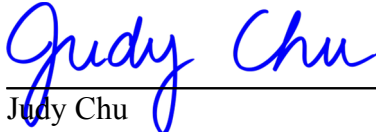
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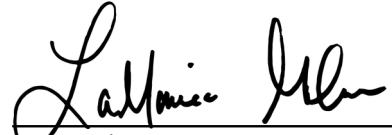
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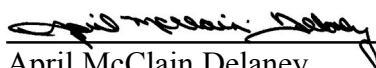
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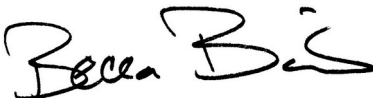
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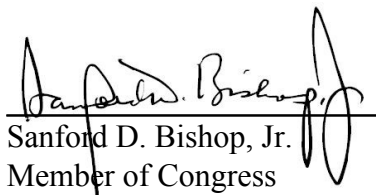
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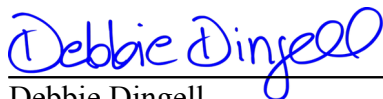
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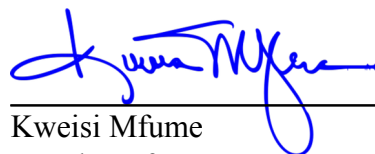
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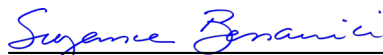
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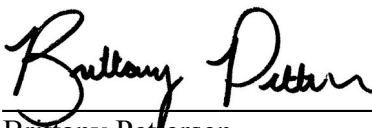
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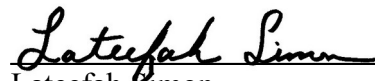
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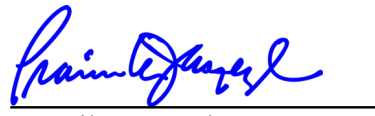
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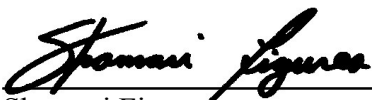
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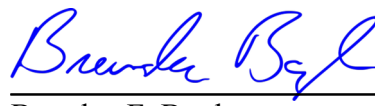
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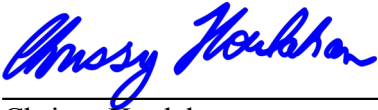
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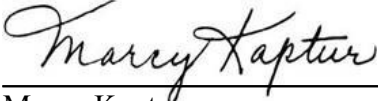
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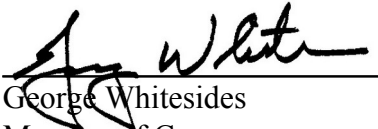
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