



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

*An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Aeronautics and Space
Administration for Fiscal Year 2017*

Chairman Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Administrator Bolden, welcome. I'm glad you're here. Mr. Chairman, this Committee has demonstrated time and again that U.S. leadership in space is a bipartisan priority. I believe that many of the hard-working scientists, engineers and innovators working at NASA share our interest in ensuring America leads the world in space.

There are some areas of agreement between the Committee and the administration in NASA's Fiscal Year 2017 budget request. But this proposed budget continues to tie our astronauts' feet to the ground and makes a Mars mission all but impossible.

This budget cuts funding for human exploration by nearly 1 billion dollars, and robotic exploration by almost a quarter of a billion dollars.

The budget request once again underfunds the Space Launch System and Orion programs. This administration cannot continue to tout plans to send astronauts to Mars while strangling the programs that will take them there.

The administration also attempts to redistribute funding within NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

For example, Jupiter's moon Europa is one of the most promising destinations we have in our own solar system for finding life beyond our planet. However, this year's request of only \$17 million for the Europa mission is incredibly disappointing considering the mission's potential. This represents roughly a 90 percent reduction from the Fiscal Year 2016 level.

However, support for other priorities such as the James Webb Space Telescope, the Transitioning Exoplanet Survey Satellite, and the Wide Field Infrared Space Telescope is encouraging.

Missions like these, as well as the search for exoplanets and signs of life in other areas of our universe, captivate the American public's imagination.

Overall, though, there is a lack of balance in the science account request.

One of the most glaring examples is the disproportionate increase the Earth Science Division receives at the expense of other science divisions and human and robotic space exploration.

This represents a 70 percent increase for the Earth Science Division since the Fiscal Year 2007 request. Over the same period, NASA's overall yearly budget has only increased 20 percent.

The Earth science budget request is 42 percent more than the planetary science budget request. In fact, the planetary science budget request is a reduction of \$113 million over last year's level.

The Earth Science request also is more than the Astrophysics division, the James Webb Space Telescope, and the Heliophysics Division combined. There are 13 other federal agencies involved in earth science research, but only one that is responsible for space science and exploration, and that's NASA.

This budget also proposes \$223 million to fund the uninspiring Asteroid Retrieval and Redirect Mission.

On April 15, 2010, the President directed NASA to conduct a crewed mission to an asteroid by 2025. Then, with the 2014 Budget Request, the administration changed course and directed NASA to "redirect" an asteroid to orbit the Moon and then visit that asteroid in lunar orbit.

Then last year NASA decided to only remove and redirect a boulder from a larger asteroid. Originally scheduled for 2017, then 2020, this budget request now slips the first robotic launch to 2021. The crewed encounter will also slip to 2026 – and more likely later based on SLS mission requirements.

In practical terms, the President's own budget delays the ARM beyond the next administration's second term.

All of NASA's advisory bodies have criticized the project. International interest is absent. The scientific community is unimpressed.

The administration continues to push this mission on NASA without any connection to a larger exploration roadmap and absent support from the scientific community or NASA's own advisory committees.

It is NASA's responsibility to provide a compelling plan for space exploration and execute it. It is Congress's responsibility to ensure NASA's budget is prioritized and funded. This Committee will do everything in its power to support American leadership in space.

Mr. Chairman, before I yield back, let me compliment Administrator Bolden because I think he is a committed public servant. I think he is doing the best job anybody can do under the circumstances. And I have a hunch if he were writing this budget, it might vary slightly from the administration's proposed budget. You don't need to respond to that Administrator Bolden. We all have our different priorities. But this is simply to say I appreciate the job that you're doing and I continue to be impressed with your sincerity and dedication.

With that I yield back.

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