AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
Executive Office

December 13, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair, House Appropriations
2306 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, Senate Appropriations
113 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 21502

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Frelinghuysen, Chair Cochran, Ranking Member Lowey, and Ranking Member Leahy:

On behalf of the over 7,000 members of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), I write today to thank you for your support of the astronomical sciences (astrophysics, planetary science, and solar physics) in your respective FY 2018 appropriations bills and to ask for your continued support as you complete work on a final conferenced bill. We are advocating elsewhere for higher discretionary caps in FY 2018 and FY 2019. Should the additional budget authority materialize, we ask that you adjust the CJS allocation commensurate with the caps increase, so that the final CJS bill can provide at least $8 billion for NSF and $20.3 billion for NASA in addition to satisfying the subcommittee's other priorities.

Civilian research programs support our economy, drive our global competitiveness, and help our fellow Americans to lead healthy, productive lives. Our science agencies yield an incredible return on taxpayer investment by carrying out cutting-edge research that deepens human understanding of the universe and our place within it; protects our way of life; and brings new technology and ideas to society. Children inspired by missions to Mars or students carrying out cosmology research do not just become astronomers, but also inventors, entrepreneurs, computer scientists, engineers, teachers, and more.

The additional CJS allocation we seek will allow NASA and NSF to maintain robust, balanced programs that fund top priorities of the consensus-based decadal surveys and will in turn ensure the United States' place as the world leader in discovery research. Just this fall, three Americans won the Nobel Prize in Physics for detecting gravitational waves from merging black holes with NSF-funded LIGO. LIGO's most recent detection from merging neutron stars was also seen by more than 70 telescopes on the ground and in space, most of which are NSF- or NASA-supported. As opportunity to discover abounds, however, budget constraints increasingly force agencies to leave meritorious science on the table.

We look forward to working with you to ensure that the United States continues its long-standing leadership in the astronomical sciences and innovation. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me. You can also reach our Director of Public Policy, Dr. Joel Parriott, at (202) 328-2010.

Sincerely,

Kevin B. Marvel

Kevin Marvel, PhD
Chief Executive Officer, American Astronomical Society

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