



# AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Executive Office

November 27, 2017

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
H-232 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
House Minority Leader  
H-204 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
S-221 The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and Pelosi,

On behalf of the over 7,000 members of the American Astronomical Society (AAS), I am writing to urge you to take bipartisan action to raise the Budget Control Act's caps on discretionary spending for at least FY2018 and FY2019. We are gravely concerned about the consequences of these caps on civilian and defense research programs, which support our economy, drive our global competitiveness, and help our fellow Americans to lead healthy, productive lives. At least two years of relief will provide more predictability for these long-term research programs, and we ask for parity in relief for nondefense and defense programs.

Our civilian science agencies yield an incredible return on taxpayer investment by supporting cutting-edge research that deepens human understanding of the universe and our place within it, protects our way of life, and brings new technology, ideas, and even companies to industry. Children inspired by missions to Mars or students carrying out cosmology research do not just become astronomers, but also inventors, entrepreneurs, computer scientists, engineers, and teachers.

Researchers supported by NASA, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy search for Earth-like planets around nearby stars, identify potentially hazardous asteroids, investigate the origins of the chemical building blocks of life, and probe the universe's beginnings. Just last month, three Americans won the Nobel Prize in Physics for the detection of gravitational waves with NSF-funded LIGO. LIGO's most recent detection was also seen in light waves by more than 70 telescopes in space and around the world, primarily by NSF- and NASA-funded facilities. Even as opportunity to discover abounds, science agencies are increasingly forced to leave meritorious science on the table and close facilities due to constraints in grant funding driven by BCA caps.

Prompt action to provide equal relief from sequestration to defense and nondefense discretionary funding is critical to our nation's future as a country of opportunity and innovation. We at the AAS call on Congress to enact a fresh solution to this issue and stand ready to aid in the effort.

Sincerely,

Kevin Marvel  
Chief Executive Officer, American Astronomical Society