

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 14, 2026

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

We respectfully request \$9 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) in the Fiscal Year 2027 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, with a corresponding increase to NASA's overall topline. This funding level is essential to sustaining U.S. leadership in space exploration, protecting critical national security capabilities, and maintaining the workforce and long-term scientific progress that define NASA's mission. America's space program remains unmatched, but that standing is not guaranteed without continued investment.

At \$9 billion, SMD could sustain its current mission portfolio, maintain its fleet of operating spacecraft, honor international partnerships, and continue development of priority missions identified by the National Academies' Decadal Surveys. In the coming years, NASA will launch several major science missions: the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, the Dragonfly mission to Saturn's moon Titan, the NEO Surveyor asteroid detection mission, and new missions to Venus, the Moon, and Mars. These build upon an operational fleet already delivering world-class science — the James Webb Space Telescope, Parker Solar Probe, and multiple Mars missions — representing decades of investment and the expertise of a highly skilled scientific and technical workforce.

America's achievements in space science remain unparalleled. The United States launched the first successful mission to Venus in 1962 and to Mars in 1964, and has since reached every major planetary body in the solar system. Our space telescopes have revolutionized humanity's understanding of the universe and inspired generations of students to pursue careers in STEM. NASA's heliophysics missions study the Sun and help protect communications, navigation, and intelligence infrastructure, while Earth-observing satellites provide data essential for weather forecasting, disaster response, agriculture, and national security.

The United States and its allies are not alone in pursuing ambitious space science programs. China has significantly expanded its capabilities in recent years, including landing a rover on Mars, returning samples from the far side of the Moon, and pursuing a broad deep space

exploration program. The United States, not China, must be the first to land on and return samples from Mars, discover signs of life beyond Earth, and return humans to the lunar surface for the first time in more than half a century. Sustained investment in NASA science is how we ensure that outcome.

Recent funding uncertainty has underscored the importance of stable congressional support. The Office of Management and Budget's FY2026 proposal to significantly reduce NASA science funding caused disruption across the space science community. Although Congress ultimately rejected those cuts, months of uncertainty delayed projects, disrupted contractual planning, reduced research grants, and contributed to the loss of highly trained personnel. NASA's workforce and research partners require stable, predictable funding to successfully execute missions that often take decades to develop. The nation cannot afford to surrender leadership in space in pursuit of short-term, nonstrategic budget cuts.

Consistent with priorities identified by the National Academies' Decadal Surveys, we recommend funding NASA's science divisions approximately as follows:

- **Planetary Science – \$3,063 million:** Supporting missions that explore the solar system, search for signs of habitability and life, and defend Earth from potentially hazardous asteroids.
- **Astrophysics – \$2,080 million:** Sustaining flagship observatories such as the James Webb Space Telescope while supporting upcoming missions including the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope and early development of the Habitable Worlds Observatory.
- **Earth Science – \$2,791 million:** Maintaining critical Earth observation systems that support weather forecasting, disaster response, agriculture, national security, and economic planning.
- **Heliophysics – \$985 million:** Advancing understanding of the Sun and space weather through missions studying solar activity and its effects on Earth and space-based infrastructure.
- **Biological and Physical Sciences – \$110 million:** Supporting research on biological systems, materials science, and human health in microgravity environments to enable future exploration missions.

NASA science investments also deliver substantial economic returns. In FY2023 alone, NASA generated \$75 billion in economic activity nationwide, a 3-to-1 return on investment, supporting more than 300,000 jobs directly and indirectly. In states without legacy aerospace industries, that return can reach as high as 20-to-1. NASA drives innovation across healthcare, telecommunications, advanced manufacturing, optics, computing, and commercial space, with more than three-quarters of congressional districts home to institutions or businesses that receive NASA science funding.

In an era of growing global competition in space, investing in NASA science sends a clear signal of continued U.S. commitment to exploration and discovery. We urge the Committee to provide \$9 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate in FY2027, with a corresponding increase to NASA's overall topline, and look forward to working with the Committee to ensure NASA has the resources necessary to advance American leadership in science and space.

Sincerely,

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