AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

April 24, 2026

The Honorable John Neely Kennedy
Chairman, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Chairman, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Development and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Kennedy, Chairman Fleischmann, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Kaptur,

The American Astronomical Society (AAS), representing over 8,500 professional astronomers, astronomy educators, and students, is grateful for the strong support your Subcommittees have provided to the astronomical sciences. Continued support from Congress for astronomy and high energy physics, through sustained and robust funding for our science agencies—we hope including **$9.5B for the Department of Energy Office of Science (DOE SC) in FY 2027**—is foundational to our country's top-class observatories, missions, and highly skilled STEM workforce.

Our community establishes priorities for the astronomical sciences every ten years through a consensus-based decadal survey process that is organized by the National Academies and commissioned by NASA, the National Science Foundation (NSF), and DOE, as well as other topically relevant agencies[1]. Similarly, priorities of the high energy physics community are outlined in the Particle Physics Project Prioritization Panel (P5) report,[2] commissioned by DOE and NSF. The AAS relies on these surveys and reports to advocate for a balanced portfolio that maximizes the return on taxpayer investment. Congressional support for this process (enabling facilities like the NSF-DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory, the top ground-based priority of the 2010 Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey) has established the U.S. as the global gold standard for scientific excellence.

Given clear, bipartisan support from Congress in FY26, the AAS is taking a keen interest in the Administration's implementation of appropriated funds. The AAS is also deeply concerned that

[1] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2023). Pathways to Discovery in Astronomy and Astrophysics for the 2020s. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
[2] Particle Physics Project Prioritization Panel (P5) Report (2023). Pathways to Innovation and Discovery in Particle Physics.

for FY27, the astronomical sciences once again face damaging proposed cuts, including a 13% cut to the DOE Office of Science. If enacted, these funding levels would severely weaken U.S. leadership in the astronomical sciences, and STEM more broadly, leaving room for international competitors to gain significant ground in these critical fields. Continued uncertainty surrounding our science agencies jeopardizes our ability to recruit and retain a highly skilled workforce and stifles our nation's ability to innovate and to answer fundamental questions about the universe.

While we are grateful to the Subcommittees for rejecting the proposed cuts and providing a slight increase in DOE SC funding in FY26, we must acknowledge that U.S. scientific leadership cannot be sustained on budgets that remain essentially flat from year to year in the face of significant inflationary pressure. We believe our funding request below, while ambitious, is necessary to support the top priorities of the astronomy decadal survey and P5 report, and to maintain our nation's global leadership in discovery, technology, and innovation. We remain ready to be of assistance as the Subcommittees work to ensure that FY26 funds are spent as directed, and that U.S. science is robustly supported in FY27.

Department of Energy Office of Science

We request $9.5 billion for the DOE Office of Science (SC) to support the full spectrum of science at DOE, including high-energy physics research that studies the cosmos to better understand dark energy and other topics within fundamental physics.

DOE SC is critical to U.S. innovation and supports a wide array of science. Within the Cosmic Frontier program, DOE SC led the construction of the camera for the Rubin Observatory, which is the largest digital camera ever built. The High Energy Physics Office also supports the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument (DESI), which uncovered hints of evolving dark energy in results released last year. Just last week, DESI completed its originally planned 3D map of the universe, ahead of schedule and capturing vastly more data than expected.[3] While DESI continues to take observations, robust support for DOE SC will allow for timely upgrades to DESI (i.e., DESI-II) that will improve detector sensitivity and allow scientists to look much farther back in time. DOE SC is also partnering with NASA to build the Lunar Surface Electromagnetics Experiment (LuSEE)-Night mission—set to launch in early FY2027—to detect the universe's earliest radio signals from the far side of the Moon, as well as the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer, which is attached to the International Space Station and studies cosmic ray events in low Earth orbit. DOE SC also plays a key role in CMB science in Antarctica. Continued support for DOE SC will allow for robust upgrades to SPT-3G and the BICEP array, now jointly referred to as the South Pole Observatory. These upgrades will be critical for answering the most pressing questions of the astronomy decadal survey despite the disappointing cancellation of the CMB-S4 experiment by NSF and DOE.

DOE SC is also using its vast astronomical datasets to train and catalyze discoveries using AI as part of the Genesis Mission[4], DOE's agency-wide initiative to develop an integrated platform to connect powerful AI systems with the country's unique scientific datasets. Within astronomy,

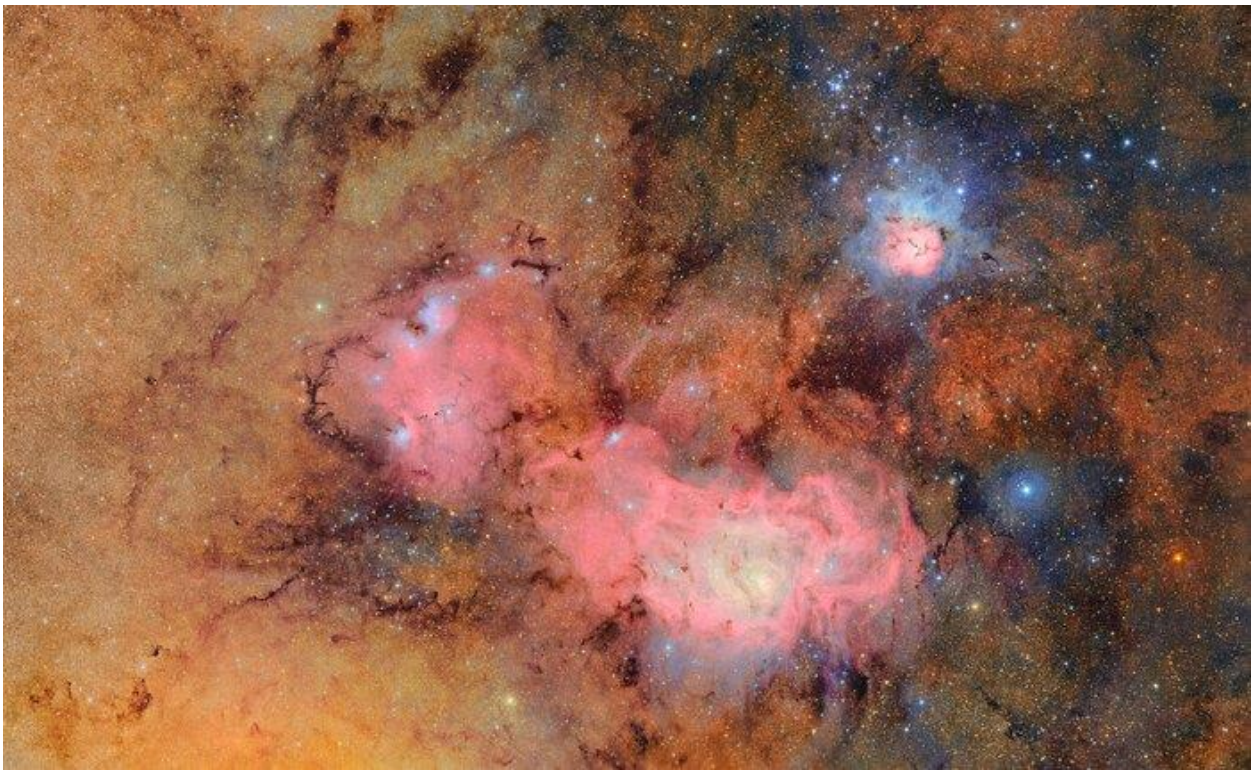
[3] Berkeley Lab (2026). DESI Completes Planned 3D Map of the Universe and Continues Exploring.
[4] Department of Energy (2025). The Genesis Mission: A National Mission to Accelerate Science Through Artificial Intelligence.

Genesis will allow for an increased pace of discovery in response to the trove of incoming data from large sky surveys like Rubin and DESI. As written in the most recent Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee (AAAC) report[5], "Genesis will significantly boost these efforts across all Cosmic Frontier projects, resulting in an accelerated pace of discovery and enabling a broader range of 'Big Data' analyses not possible conventionally."

Thank you again for your support, and for your time and consideration of these priorities.

Sincerely,

Dara Norman, PhD
President, American Astronomical Society



This image of the Trifid and Lagoon Nebulae combines 678 separate images taken by the Vera C. Rubin Observatory in just over seven hours of observing time. The image reveals a vibrant stellar nursery of glowing gas and dust several thousand light-years away from Earth. Such images inform our understanding of how stars evolve - eventually distributing elements including gold and iron throughout the Galaxy. Credit: NSF-DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory.

[5] Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee (March 2026). Astronomy and Astrophysics Advisory Committee Annual Report for 2025-2026.