

17 April 2026

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Vice Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Collins, Chairman Cole, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the undersigned professional societies and organizations representing tens of thousands of scientists, researchers, students, and enthusiasts across all 50 states, we urge Congress to appropriate \$9 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate (SMD) in FY 2027.

We thank the Appropriations Committee for its commitment to funding the U.S. Earth and space science enterprise, as demonstrated in the final FY 2026 appropriations. We urge the Committee to build on that commitment in FY 2027 by providing the ambitious funding needed to secure U.S. preeminence in space against increasingly capable global competition, accelerate progress toward decadal science priorities, and support the skilled space workforce and STEM ecosystem critical for America's future in space.

Maintaining space leadership in the 21st century demands that we maintain our commitment to the scientific exploration of space and NASA's Science Mission Directorate has led this commitment for decades. Thanks to the steadfast support of SMD, American planetary exploration missions have reached every major body in the Solar System, a feat no other nation has achieved. Our space telescopes have revolutionized humanity's fundamental understanding of the universe. Our Earth-observing satellites provide data essential to national security and weather forecasting, while also spurring commercial development. And our study of the Sun protects the energy, communications, navigation, and intelligence infrastructure on which all modern life depends.

However, the United States is no longer alone in these pursuits. China has rapidly expanded its space science ambitions in the past decade, landing a rover on Mars, returning samples from the far side of the Moon, and expanding its investment across every discipline of space science.

An appropriation of \$9 billion for SMD will provide NASA with the resources it needs to advance the nation's highest-priority new science missions while maintaining our fleet of ongoing missions, keeping commitments to international partners, and catalyzing additional commercial innovation and opportunities. These investments, adjusted for inflation, will allow NASA to return to its budgetary level during the president's first term. After years of declining purchasing power and the disruptions of the past year, Congress must reinvigorate our pioneering space science program.

Ambitious funding for NASA SMD strengthens U.S. science and exploration and directly drives economic growth nationwide. NASA SMD funding supports economic activity in all states and most congressional districts by generating new industries, high-paying jobs, and technological innovations that impact sectors such as telecommunications, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing.

Within Planetary Science, this appropriation will support the development and launch of the nuclear-powered Dragonfly rotorcraft mission to Saturn's moon Titan, the American return to Venus after more than 30 years with DAVINCI and VERITAS, the asteroid-hunter NEO Surveyor, and the VIPER prospecting mission that directly supports the goal of building a sustained human presence on the Moon. This funding would also enable the further development of the Mars Future Missions program, which preserves the specialized technologies and expertise from precision entry, descent, and landing to surface and orbital operations developed over the past three decades. This program is essential for future robotic and crewed missions to Mars. NASA will also be able to maintain support for critical ongoing missions and further develop the Small Innovative Missions for Planetary Exploration (SIMPLEx) program, which bolsters the growing commercial interest in space science and provides flight opportunities for universities and other research institutions.

Within Astrophysics, the requested appropriation will ensure the timely development and launch of upcoming missions to elucidate the mysteries of dark matter and dark energy, and to search for signs of life on planets around other stars. In addition to advancing our understanding of the universe, the technology developed for Astrophysics missions has provided great benefits to society, including the development of digital cameras and new medical X-ray imaging devices. Thanks to sustained investments from Congress, the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope is on budget and ahead of schedule, with a launch expected as early as this fall. Early investments in technology maturation for the Habitable Worlds Observatory, the top space-based priority of the Astro2020 decadal survey, will help ensure that future flagship missions remain on budget and on schedule. Finally, this appropriation would support NASA in maintaining a balanced portfolio of Astrophysics missions, including the selection of a Probe this year and the development of small and medium-class explorer missions.

Within Earth Science, the requested appropriation will allow NASA to advance the flagship Earth System Observatory, a priority of the 2017 Earth Science decadal survey; support Landsat Next, which will extend what has been the nation's most important and well-used data stream for more than fifty continuous years; and maintain continuity of weather and

environmental observations essential to every sector of the global economy. Additionally, NASA will be able to expand the development of application tools and resources, fueled by Earth Science data, for sectors and industries ranging from financial services to aviation and agriculture. NASA will also be able to fully support a healthy cadence of small- and mid-size missions, flights, and scientific balloons; critical initiatives to support opportunities for students and early-career researchers; and significant, lower-cost science. This appropriation will also support the further development of the Commercial Satellite Data Acquisition program.

Within Heliophysics, this appropriation will support operational missions such as the Parker Solar Probe and Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe (IMAP), which provide unprecedented observations of the solar wind and its interaction with interstellar space. This appropriation will also support the Voyager spacecraft, which is the farthest human-made object from Earth (16.1 billion miles away) and continues to return useful data from beyond the edge of the Sun's influence. This appropriation will ensure that the Geospace Dynamics Constellation (GDC), DYNAMIC, and HelioSwarm missions can continue to progress on schedule without underfunding the rest of the division. These missions will advance our ability to forecast space weather events that threaten intelligence and commercial satellites, power grids, and communications networks. The ability to predict and protect against adverse space weather events is increasingly critical to safeguarding American assets, infrastructure, and personnel.

Within the Biological and Physical Sciences (BPS) Division, the requested appropriation is a first step toward implementing the 2023 BPS decadal survey. This appropriation will enable further fundamental research into the space environment and its use as a unique laboratory for research and development that cannot be conducted on Earth. This research yields advancements in biomedical and pharmaceutical sciences that would otherwise be too costly for any one commercial enterprise to undertake. Enabled and supported by NASA's sustained continuous human presence in space onboard the International Space Station, BPS helps us better understand the effects of variable gravity conditions and radiation on biological systems. It also supports the development of new materials and processes uniquely enabled by the space environment. This work is critical to meeting the administration's goals of a robust commercial LEO (low earth orbit) destination capability and safe human exploration of the Moon and Mars.

Finally, but most significantly, a \$9 billion appropriation will enable NASA to restore, sustain, and train the workforce essential to the space enterprise. Within the last year, NASA has lost over 4,000 employees. At 14,000 full-time employees, the agency's staffing is at its lowest level since before the Apollo Program began. Additionally, thousands more contractors were laid off or reassigned last year, taking with them institutional knowledge that underpins American leadership in space. Despite advances in technology, infrastructure, and tools such as artificial intelligence, people remain the heart of the genius, innovation, and solutions that drive NASA forward, a sentiment echoed in Administrator Jared Isaacman's efforts to restore the NASA workforce. Increased funding for NASA SMD will allow the agency to reinvigorate its scientific workforce nationwide by

reestablishing and expanding internships, fellowships, and postdoctoral opportunities. We need a workforce as ambitious as our plans to keep America first in space.

Therefore, we respectfully but urgently request \$9 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate in FY 2027, with explicit language to ensure that Congressional intent is honored. We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to working with you throughout the FY 2027 appropriations process.

Sincerely,

American Astronomical Society

American Geophysical Union (AGU)

American Physical Society

American Society for Gravitational and Space Research

Association of American Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

The Planetary Society

Universities Space Research Association (USRA)