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The House Science Committee held a full committee markup of two bills, the Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act (H.R.5509) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Authorization Act of 2018 (H.R.5503), both of which were ultimately reported favorably and passed out of committee to await a full chamber vote on the House floor.

The Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to provide grants for research about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education approaches and the STEM-related workforce. The bill would establish three areas for competitive STEM Innovation and Apprenticeship grants, all of which would come from funds within NSF's Education and Human Resources Directorate. The three grant areas direct NSF to focus on: community colleges who are developing or improving associate degree and certificate programs in STEM fields in which there is significant workforce demand in their region; universities partnering with employers who commit to offering apprenticeships, internships, or other applied learning experiences to students enrolled in a four-year STEM degree; and institutions of higher learning or nonprofits conducting research on the best practices of computer-based and online courses for technical skills and training. The bill would also direct the Directorate of Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences at NSF to commission research on skilled technical workforce development in the U.S. compared to other developed countries.

The NASA Authorization Act, which would reauthorize the agency for FY 2018 through FY 2019, was intensely debated during the markup due to disagreements about the language slashing the FY 2019 authorized funds for Earth Science. The original bill as introduced would cut Earth Science funding for FY 2019 by \$471 million – roughly a quarter of the total Earth Science budget that was provided for FY 2018. Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30) stated that such deep cuts to NASA Earth Science would harm a variety of programs, from climate science to natural disaster response programs, while Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX-21) defended the cuts based on his position that Earth science research is not a core mission of NASA. Representative Ed Perlmutter (D-CO-7) offered an amendment to restore the \$471 million in Earth Science funding, bringing the total amount authorized for NASA in FY2019 to \$21.2 billion. With that amendment approved by a vote of 27-5, there was enough Democratic support for the bill to be pulled out of the apparent partisan gridlock and pass through committee by a vote of 26-7.

Other amendments that were adopted for the NASA Authorization Act included one directing NASA to continue efforts to send human explorers to Mars by 2033, and another affirming the National Space Council Policy Directive 1 that provides for returning humans to the moon. The Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act was approved by the committee with the adoption of only one amendment that was offered by Representative Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR-1) to include industry or private sector partnerships as priorities in considering applications for grants.

Sources: Library of Congress, Space Policy Online, U.S. House of Representatives
