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Since the Presidential Budget Request for fiscal year (FY) 2015 was released on March 4, lawmakers have drafted bills that would authorize science funding. Members of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee proposed two bills setting authorization levels for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Subcommittee on Research and Technology sent the FIRST Act of 2014 (H.R. 4186) markup to the full committee, while full committee Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) introduced legislation of her own, the America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2014 (H.R. 4159).

The FIRST Act would authorize \$7.279 billion in funding for NSF for FY 2015, a 1.5 percent increase from FY 2014. Of that funding, \$1.266 billion would go to the Geosciences Directorate, an almost 3 percent decrease from FY 2014. Critics of the FIRST Act are dissatisfied that it only authorizes funding for NSF and related agencies for two years. Preceding 2013, science funding authorizations spanned three years in length. The bill also specifies research funding levels for each NSF directorate, a decision which previously has been left to the agency.

Representative Johnson's America COMPETES Reauthorization Act aims to increase STEM research and education by authorizing \$7.521 billion for NSF in FY 2015, a 5 percent increase from FY 2014. The legislation also authorizes a 5 percent funding increase for NIST and the Department of Energy's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA-E). The legislation funds NSF, NIST, and ARPA-E until 2020 and leaves discretion on NSF directorate funding levels to the agency.

Sources: E&E News; the Government Printing Office; House Science Space Technology Committee
