

The Administration's Federal Research and Development Budget for Fiscal Year 2013

Witnesses:

John Holdren

Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy

Members Present:

Ralph Hall (R-TX), Chairman

Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Ranking Member

Lamar Smith (R-TX)

Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)

Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)

Judy Biggert (R-IL)

Marcia Fudge (D-OH)

Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN)

Ben Lujan (D-NM)

Steven Palazzo (R-MS)

Paul Tonko (D-NY)

Andy Harris (R-MD)

Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

Randy Hultgren (R-IL)

John Sarbanes (D-MD)

Chip Cravaack (R-MN)

Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)

Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD)

Hansen Clarke (D-MI)

Mo Brooks (R-AL)

On February 17, 2012, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing to receive an overview of the Administration's federal research and development (R&D) budget for fiscal year (FY) 2013 from Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director John Holdren.

Chairman Ralph Hall (R-TX) opened by expressing his disapproval of the Obama Administration's budget proposal, specifically its approach to the national debt. Hall said that since President Obama took office the national debt has increased 108 percent to where it now stands near \$15.4 trillion. Hall expressed his concern over the U.S. spending rate by saying, "This level of spending is simply not sustainable, and to be perfectly blunt, it's not creating jobs, growing the economy, or improving the lives of the American taxpayer." The chairman condoned the spending of money on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, but recommended a push for increased departmental efficiency. This increase in efficiency would involve the elimination of programs that are duplicative and wasteful. Hall cautioned the Obama Administration not to focus too much on basic research because he believes "blanket increases even for our federal science agencies are not the same as prudent investment and do not guarantee innovation." Hall closed by stating his disappointment in the decrease in funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

In her opening statement, Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) expressed praise for the efforts in the proposed budget to increase efficiency and achieve the most possible with modest increases. She was pleased to see that funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) would increase. Johnson said she supports NIST because she believes the R&D they undertake works to "ensure that our buildings withstand these disasters and our citizens have the information they need to be safe is necessary to protect both lives and property." She said her support for disaster prevention stems from the devastation of

Galveston, Texas, in the aftermath Hurricane Ike in 2008. Johnson said she supports the budget request for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite – R Series (GOES-R) and Joint Polar Systems Satellite (JPSS) satellites because of their vitality in providing forecasters with data to aide disaster prevention. She concluded by expressing support for an overall STEM strategic plan.

Holdren opened by reiterating President Obama's State of the Union address by saying the U.S. must "work towards an America that leads the world in educating its people, that attracts a new generation of high tech manufacturing and high paying jobs, and takes control of its own energy." He announced that the budget proposes \$140.8 billion for federal R&D a 1.4 percent increase over FY 2012. He said not all areas of science and research would receive budget increases but significant agencies that would receive increases are the National Science Foundation (NSF, + \$7.4 billion), the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science (+ \$4.6 billion), and NIST (+ \$708 million). He stated that despite the overall funding cuts to NASA there was an increase in funding for the development of a heavy lift launch system and the Orion Multi Purpose Crew Vehicle (MPCV). Holdren announced \$4 billion in funding for overall STEM programs across the nation and announced that the administration's STEM strategic plan should be available within a couple of weeks.

Hall began the question and answer period by focusing on NASA. He questioned why the U.S. pulled out of a 2016 joint Mars mission with the European Space Agency. Holdren said that the decision to withdrawal from the agreement was financial. He made it clear that the administration has not abandoned the quest to go to Mars and has requested \$1.88 billion for a heavy lifting launch system and an additional \$1 billion on the MPCV.

Johnson asked Holdren to explain how a 20 percent cut can be made to overall STEM education when a strategic plan has not been released. Holdren commented that a strategic plan will be available within a couple of weeks, but that the budget proposal "focused very heavily on the information developed in that inventory and in the preparation of the plan in making our decisions across the STEM education domain." When evaluating STEM areas to cut or increase he said they "tried to look for the highest leverage where an additional dollar could make the biggest contribution." Johnson expressed worry over the growing concern that we will not be able to launch another JPSS satellite into orbit before the current one goes offline. She asked Holdren on the status of getting the JPSS orbit. Holdren confirmed that it is likely the existing NPOESS Preparatory Project (NPP) satellite will expire before we can launch JPSS which would result in a gap in weather data. He said the reason for this is because NOAA did not get the amount of money they requested for in FY 2012. Holdren said they are attempting to make room for funding in this budget by compensating with a decrease in funds for NOAA R&D.

Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) questioned Holdren on the status of incorporating transformational fast neutron reactors into nuclear waste recycling. Fast neutron reactors are a category of nuclear reactors that can recycle rich nuclear waste from nuclear power plants. Holdren said that there is interest in this application but this application still produces waste, which does not help to solve the overall problem.

Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) emphasized the importance of NOAA but questioned why the National Weather Service portion of NOAA received a decrease in funding. Holdren explained that the reason for the decrease was based on Administration's priority in funding JPSS.

Jerry McNerney (D-CA) and Marcia Fudge (D-OH) directed questions related to hydraulic fracturing at Holdren. McNerney asked if the budget was allocating enough money to studying the environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing. Holdren believed enough money was being allocated and stated that there would be a 150 percent increase in funding from FY 2012 to FY 2013. He said he supports the coordinated effort between the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), DOE, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to study the process of hydraulic fracturing and supports the harvesting of natural gas in a safe and responsible way. Fudge asked Holdren which of these departments would be responsible for assessing the effects of hydraulic fracturing on public health. Holdren replied that the EPA is drawing on experts from within their organization and collaborating with officials from the National Institutes of Health.

Opening statements, witness testimony, and a web cast of the hearing can be found at the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology web site.
