

Published on *American Geosciences Institute* (<https://www.americangeosciences.org>)

Home > An Overview of the Administration's Federal Research and Development Budget for Fiscal Year 2012

An Overview of the Administration's Federal Research and Development Budget for Fiscal Year 2012

Witnesses

Dr. John P. Holdren

Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy

Committee Members Present

Ralph Hall, Chair (R-TX)

Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member (D-TX)

Lamar Smith (R-TX)

Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)

Judy Biggert (R-IL)

Randy Neugebauer (R-TX)

Paul Broun (R-GA)

Sandy Adams (R-FL)

Benjamin Quayle (R-AZ)

Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN)

Scott Rigell (R-VA)

Steven Palazzo (R-MS)

Andy Harris (R-MD)

Randy Hultgren (R-IL)

Chip Cravaack (R-MN)

Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

David Wu (D-OR)

Brad Miller (D-NC)

Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)

Donna Edwards (D-MD)

Marcia Fudge (D-OH)

Ben Lujan (D-NM)

Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

John Sarbanes (D-MD)

Frederica Wilson (D-FL)

Hansen Clarke (D-MI)

To gather information on the fiscal year (FY) 2012 budget request for federal research and development, the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a hearing on February 17, 2011.

Chairman Ralph Hall (R-TX) opened by saying that, considering the country's tremendous national debt, the level of spending proposed in President Obama's budget request is "simply not sustainable." While he acknowledged that investments in science and technology would likely yield economic gains, Hall argued that the government must choose to make prudent investments rather than blanket increases. Hall expressed concern over the amount and effectiveness of money that has been used and is proposed to be spent on climate change research. "From 2006 to now, we have spent \$36 billion on climate change and what do we have to show for it? A lot of programs and pamphlets. We need to change that," he said.

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) said that the FY 2012 budget request reflects the imperative to invest in research and development and at the same time demonstrates fiscal restraint. Johnson warned, however, that the House proposed continuing resolution for FY 2011 might be “heading in the wrong direction.”

Dr. John Holdren, Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), outlined the highlights of the President's budget request for education, innovation and infrastructure. The budget reflects the administration's commitment to basic science and research by proposing increased funding for the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) laboratories, said Holdren. The request keeps NASA on track according to the NASA Authorization Act of 2010 (S.3729; Public Law 111-267) and would increase funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) for climate science research and Earth observations.

Ranking Member Johnson expressed dismay that the budget did not propose more funding for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) or for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs that encourage female and minority student involvement. The budget dedicates \$3.4 billion to STEM education programs across the government, which is a decrease from 2010 enacted levels, said Holdren, but the savings could be due to increased efficiency and agency coordination.

Johnson asked Holdren what kind of impact the proposed cuts in the House continuing resolution for FY 2011 would have on science. While the analysis of the possible cuts has only recently begun, it is clear “they would be devastating,” according to Holdren. One impact to NSF would be granting 500 fewer research awards, resulting in 5,500 fewer personnel being supported. Citing increases in productivity attributed to innovation; jobs supported by federally funded research and development; and education investments to secure a future workforce, Holdren said “it would be imprudent” to cut off the sources of federal research.

A divide existed within the committee on the validity of the science supporting evidence of climate change and its causes. Representative Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) cited a report that found that 97% of active climate scientists have reached the certain conclusion that climate change is occurring and that human activities are largely to blame. Holdren noted that virtually every major scientific society and agency in the U.S. and worldwide has acknowledged the existence of man-made climate change. On the other hand, Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) submitted a letter signed by 100 skeptics doubting that global warming is caused by humans. Chairman Hall questioned whether climate change predictions have been based on “bad science” and said the committee will hold hearings to investigate both sides of the argument. “There are always skeptics,” Holdren admitted. However, he argued, with the support of Representative John Sarbanes (D-MD), that public policy should be based on the majority view held within the scientific community and that lawmakers should not “bet the welfare of the public” on the minority opinion.

Representative Brad Miller (D-NC) asked what the proposed research on climate change would aim to accomplish. Holdren said there is a “tremendous amount of detail” still to be learned including the rate and patterns of climate change and the effects it would have on precipitation and severe weather events. Miller asked about the best way to handle policy related to the production and supply of rare earth elements (REEs) and noted that the issue does not fall neatly under the jurisdiction of one agency or one congressional committee. Ninety seven percent of REE production is in China, said Holdren, even though there are significant resources in the U.S. and Australia. Holdren said there are efforts to restore mining in the U.S. and that the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) plans to form a subcommittee to investigate critical materials within the U.S., including REEs.

A primary concern of several members was how to keep manufacturing in the U.S. once the invention and innovation has been achieved. The NSTC will form a subcommittee within the NSTC Committee on Technology to study the best strategies to link innovation and manufacturing, Holdren announced.

Holdren discussed the broad energy policy the administration is supporting based on a clean energy standard (CES), as opposed to a renewable energy standard (RES). CES would include clean coal, natural gas and nuclear energy. Though the budget would decrease funding for nuclear energy overall, Rohrabacher said he was pleased that the budget would increase funding for research on small, modular nuclear reactors.
