

House Appropriations Committee holds budget hearings for FY 2020

March 26, 2019

Beginning on March 26, subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee held a series of fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget hearings for the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Energy (DOE), and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Administrators from each agency gave justifications for their budgets, which are derived from the White House's FY 2020 [budget plan](#), and laid out their agency's priorities to be addressed in FY 2020. The President's budget proposes sweeping [budget cuts](#) to many science programs within these agencies. The week began with NSF's hearing, where Director France Córdova was questioned by Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) Subcommittee Chairman José Serrano (D-NY-15) about how the proposed 12 percent budget decrease from the 2019 enacted level would affect NSF's programs. Chairman Serrano also expressed dismay at the proposed 9.5 percent cut to the [Education and Human Resources](#) account at NSF, which he believes would hurt programs that increase STEM participation. Córdova stated that cuts to the overall budget would affect the agency's various programs equally and would lead to the distribution of 1200 to 1400 fewer grants overall and 400 fewer graduate fellowships. Córdova assured the subcommittee, however, that this budget cut would not prevent NSF from focusing heavily on its 10 Big Ideas and advancements in Artificial Intelligence.

Energy and Water Subcommittee Chairwoman Marcy Kaptur (D-OH-9) was similarly concerned about the Administration's budget proposal, which plans to cut DOE's budget by 11 percent, which [Kaptur](#) said would "drastically reduce or eliminate programs critical for our nation's energy needs and security." DOE Secretary [Rick Perry](#) defended the budget, stating that it supports cutting-edge research at National Laboratories and universities throughout the U.S., which will help strengthen American competitiveness. He said that government success should not be measured by how much we spend on it and that this budget request allows success to be measured by how effectively and efficiently the government is able to use limited resources to fulfil its mission.

NOAA would receive an 18 percent budget cut, which Chairman Serrano indicated would lead to the termination of 547 civilian positions within the agency. Administrator [Neil Jacobs](#) assured the subcommittee that, despite the cuts, the budget would allow NOAA to focus on its highest priorities, which include reducing extreme weather impacts, maximizing the economic contributions of ocean and coastal resources, and advancing space innovation.

During the NASA budget hearing, Congressman Matt Cartwright (D-PA-8) stated that this third consecutive year of proposed deep cuts to Earth and climate science programs within NASA's budget contradicts the subcommittee's priorities. The budget proposes a 9 percent cut to NASA's [Science Mission Directorate](#), with the heaviest cuts in the Astrophysics and Earth Science Divisions. Administrator Jim Bridenstine explained that NASA is currently focused on a return to the moon and long-term sustainability in space travel. The budget consequently allows for strong support of NASA's [Exploration Campaign](#), which Bridenstine states will allow the U.S. to lead efforts in the return of humans to the moon.

Moving forward with their efforts in seeking explanations for the extensive proposed budget cuts within science programs, the House Appropriations Committee will continue holding budget hearings throughout the upcoming weeks.

Sources: American Institute of Physics; The White House; U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Commerce-Justice-Science Subcommittee, Energy and Water Subcommittee.
