

United States Senate

June 1, 2015

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
U.S. Capitol, Room 146A
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

I write to respectfully request that the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) receives at least \$5.3 billion in funding to support its Science mission in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.


In my position as ranking member of the Space, Science, and Competitiveness Subcommittee I look forward to working closely with you on science and technology issues. Recently, I visited the Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) to witness some of NASA's research firsthand, particularly in the areas of Earth Science and Heliophysics.

A great example of Earth Science research is the GSFC Center for Climate Simulation. Their Hyperwall of Earth observation data is a compelling visual for the power and magnitude of Earth Science research. NASA Earth Science research enables us to better study the environment, respond to natural disasters, predict extreme weather efforts, and more accurately model climate change. Yet, funding for Earth Science is constantly at risk. Funding was reduced dramatically under the Bush administration and increases under President Obama have not restored funding to the level set under President Clinton or recommended by the National Academies.

During my visit to GSFC, I also met researchers in the Heliophysics Science Division that work closely with project scientists from Michigan State University and the University of Michigan. These scientists develop critical models and simulations of solar activity, specifically space weather. This area is increasingly important as extreme space weather disturbances can damage modern electric power grids, disable GPS signals, degrade solar arrays, and disrupt airline radio communications. We must invest in our understanding of the causes of extreme space weather so that we can mitigate the adverse impacts and costs to modern society.

NASA's budget is a strategic portfolio of investments aimed at improving the overall well-being of our country. Like any portfolio, we must carefully choose our investments and remember that the balance of the overall portfolio is of the utmost importance. NASA's mission is a set of complementary, not competing, priorities that will pay returns to our nation for years to come.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
United States Senate