

**Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology**

Testimony before the Committee on House Administration

February 16, 2017

Good morning, Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee. I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak today about our Committee funding for the 115th Congress. Chairman Smith has already presented an overview of the Committee's finances, so I will make brief remarks on the Minority budget.

As you know, Chairman Smith and I don't always agree on everything, but we do agree that an increase in resources available to the Committee would be very helpful to us as we conduct our oversight and authorization activities. We incurred a 26.2% reduction in our Committee's budget from 2010 to 2013 that forced us to defer filling staff slots as well as to cut the salaries of most of the staff who were retained from previous Congresses. We also had to significantly limit Committee oversight travel by Members and staff. Thankfully, in the 113th and 114th Congresses, we received some stability in our budgets and were able to hire valuable new staff Members and carry out several oversight trips.

In the 115th Congress, the Committee will need to develop and advance legislation to reauthorize or provide policy guidance for many of the agencies under the Committee's jurisdiction, including NASA, NSF, NIST, NOAA, FAA's R&D programs, and Department of Energy programs, among others. It is also anticipated that there will be a range of significant oversight initiatives undertaken by the Committee in the 115th Congress, including some that will result in the need to develop additional legislation.

As I have said to this Committee in the past, I place a high priority on making sure that Minority Members and staff will be appropriately informed and engaged in the legislative and oversight activities of the Committee. We made full use of our funds to carry out our responsibilities in the 114th Congress, and there will be no reduction in the need for at least the level of resources provided in the 114th

Congress. We still have several unfilled staff slots, and that staffing shortfall affects our ability to carry out our legislative and oversight activities. Our budgetary constraints also affect our ability to compete with the private sector for skilled professional staff. If we are given additional funding for the 115th, I would plan, at a minimum, to hire a staff assistant to allow senior professional staff to focus their time on oversight and authorization activities.

In addition, I think that it will be very important for Members and staff to undertake oversight visits to government research facilities and laboratories under the jurisdiction of the Committee in the 115th Congress. It has been years since Members have visited most of those facilities, and it is important that our policy initiatives be informed by an understanding of the actual work being undertaken at our federal laboratories and our research universities. This need especially impacts our new Members. If we receive additional funds, I would plan on taking a number of specific domestic Member/staff CODELS, including one to the West Coast to visit DOE National Laboratories, as well as NASA facilities and high tech enterprises. I would also like to have Members visit Cape Kennedy in Florida and the Johnson Space Center in Texas to review NASA's activities, since it is the largest single authorization account under the Committee's jurisdiction.

In summary, I strongly believe that the Committee would benefit on a bipartisan basis from the increased funding being requested by the Chairman.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.