

House Science, Space, and Technology Committee Chairman Frank Lucas

Statement before the Committee on House Administration

Funding for the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

118th Congress

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Good afternoon, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the Committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss funding for the Science Committee today, and I am pleased to be joined by my Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren, who many of you know well from her time as the previous Chair of the House Administration Committee.

Before I begin, I would like to commend Chairman Steil for restarting the formal budget process.

I'm a strong proponent of regular order, and I believe this process will pay off with increased transparency and more efficient spending.

Let me say right off the bat that our Committee's requested budget does contain some thoughtfully considered increases. It is our aim to act responsibly when it comes to spending taxpayer dollars, which is why these increases have been limited to only what is absolutely necessary.

Our priorities include funding for a robust oversight program, resources for increased field hearings and site visits, modernization of our workspace, and modest increases to staff salaries to stay competitive with personal offices and the private sector.

All told, our budget request calls for a 23.5% increase over last year. When considering that request, it's worth noting that while personal offices received a 21% increase to their MRA last Congress, standing committees received significantly less in order to fund multiple select committees.

It's also important to note that the Science Committee's responsibilities have grown dramatically in the past few years.

The purpose of the Science Committee is to ensure the United States maintains our global economic, scientific, and technological leadership. That work is more important now than ever, as we face a growing threat from the Chinese Communist Party.

If given the chance, the CCP will not only take market share from us, but will also seek to impose their values on critical developing technologies like Artificial Intelligence, quantum information sciences, and unmanned aerial vehicles.

We cannot afford the economic, political, or national security consequences from falling behind the CCP.

In addition to driving American innovation and countering the threat from the CCP, our Committee is tasked with providing oversight for a substantial portfolio of scientific agencies to protect taxpayer dollars and ensure we're meeting our strategic goals.

Since the budget for this Committee was last set, there has been a significant increase in the importance and scope of our policy area. Several major legislative initiatives—including the Energy Act of 2020, the CHIPS and Science Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—dramatically increased the budgets of departments and agencies under our jurisdiction.

For example, in addition to the committee’s regular oversight of roughly \$15 billion in annual appropriations at the Department of Energy, we will be overseeing an additional \$45 billion in appropriations included in the IRA and IIJA.

There are plenty more examples just like that. The National Institute of Standards and Technology, an agency with an annual budget of around \$1 billion, received \$52 billion in mandatory funding in the CHIPS and Science Act to support domestic semiconductor manufacturing.

This increase in spending across our agencies must be accompanied by an increase in Congressional oversight. To do this, we need additional policy staff with experience in highly technical issue areas such as quantum computing, fusion energy, advanced air mobility, and climate sciences.

The competitive job market for these roles, combined with a higher cost of living, mean the Committee must increase our payroll budget if we are going to find staff capable of fulfilling our expanded oversight responsibilities.

I'm looking forward to a productive year ahead as the Science Committee empowers American innovation and ensures taxpayers are getting the maximum return on their investments in research and development.

Both myself as well as Ranking Member Lofgren appreciate your time today, and I am prepared to answer any questions you may have.