

Chairman Brian Babin
Testimony
SST Budget Request Justification

Committee Funding for the 119th Congress
House Administration Committee

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the budgetary needs of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (SST). It is a privilege to serve as Chairman of a committee dedicated to advancing America's leadership in science, innovation, and space exploration, and I appreciate your consideration of our request for increased funding to support the committee's vital work.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague, Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren, for her cooperation in building out the SST budget request. Our shared commitment to ensuring the committee operates effectively is essential, and I deeply appreciate her partnership. Under my leadership, I will absolutely maintain that Ranking Member Lofgren and the Minority will have a full one-third share of the committee's budget and staff allocations.

SST oversees federal research, space policy, and energy innovation – critical areas for national security and economic competitiveness. To fulfill our mission, we must recruit and retain highly qualified staff, conduct thorough investigations, and engage with stakeholders nationwide.

One of the most pressing challenges we face is the need to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain top talent. Staff with science, engineering, and research backgrounds demand higher salaries, and the job market for these individuals is highly competitive. The reality is, without appropriate compensation, this committee will lose experienced professionals to the private sector or executive branch, which specifically carves out special compensation packages for individuals with these backgrounds. Our committee must be able to recruit and retain qualified staff with the expertise necessary for sound policymaking and oversight. Failing to offer competitive salaries will weaken SST's ability to legislate effectively on extremely complex issues.

A key component of our budget request is funding for increased travel, including two field hearings per subcommittee for the 119th Congress. Given the rapidly evolving nature of this committee's issues, we also plan to retain funding for two additional field hearings so the committee can promptly respond to critical events.

I strongly believe that firsthand engagement is critical – especially as we work to inform and include new members of the committee. Field hearings allow us to interact directly with scientists, engineers, and industry leaders, providing deeper insights into challenges and opportunities. From research laboratories to commercial spaceflight facilities, travel is vital to effective oversight.

As Chairman, I am committed to being a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. Every request we make is based on a clear need to enhance the committee's ability to serve the American people. We are not seeking additional funding frivolously, but to ensure we fulfill our oversight and legislative responsibilities at the highest standard.

The issues within the Science, Space, and Technology Committee's jurisdiction are more pressing than ever. Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, space exploration, quantum computing, and energy innovation require proactive legislative efforts. These fields are not just about technological progress; they are about national security, economic prosperity, and maintaining America's leadership in global science and innovation.

For these reasons, as laid out in my formal budget submission, I respectfully request an increase in the committee's budget. This investment will allow us to retain top-tier staff, conduct essential travel and field hearings, and provide the necessary resources to advance American leadership in science and technology. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to working with you to ensure our committee has the resources needed to continue this important work.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions you may have.