



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:

*A Review of the Administration's Federal Research and Development Budget Proposal for
Fiscal Year 2021*

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing to review the President's fiscal year 2021 budget request for research and development. Dr. Droegemeier, I want to welcome you before our Committee for the first time in your role as Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

That said, I am disturbed, although not surprised, to see such a disappointing vision for the future of the United States science and engineering enterprise as is laid out in this budget proposal.

In the press release announcing the release of this budget, the Administration claimed that this proposal represents a 6 percent increase for R&D. That is a creative use of math that has fooled no one. This budget proposal is only 6 percent better than last year's even worse proposal. Fortunately, Congress rejected last year's proposal and appropriated increases for R&D. So in truth, this Fiscal Year 2021 budget proposal represents a 9 percent cut to R&D funding.

At the National Science Foundation, large increases for artificial intelligence and quantum science, which of course I support, are more than offset by cuts to all other areas of research, to STEM education, and to broadening participation, resulting in a 6.5 percent overall cut.

While the proposal for NASA at first blush appears to be a strong request, it amounts to a significant increase for human space exploration in large part at the expense of investments in research, high-priority science missions, and STEM education.

At the Department of Energy, the Administration proposes to cut non-defense R&D programs by \$4.5 billion. Once again, we see a proposal to eliminate the ARPA-E program, even though ARPA-E is praised across the political spectrum for its success.

Finally, the proposal includes severe cuts to atmospheric and ocean research at NOAA which will help to inform our approach to climate change mitigation, and guts EPA assessment programs which help ensure Americans have access to clean air and water.

While there are a few bright spots in this proposal, this request represents a disturbing and ill-advised disregard for the pressing issues facing this country and the urgent need for science and engineering solutions to help us address them.

Fortunately, Congress will once again have the last word. I just wish we didn't have to engage in this dangerous game each year. It sends a message to our international competitors and our own young students and researchers that we are not serious about maintaining our leadership in science and technology.

Finally, Dr. Droegemeier, while this hearing is about the budget request, we also need to discuss the larger environment for science under this Administration. While the cuts are ostensibly proposed in the name of budget austerity, in reality they appear to be driven by an ideology that aggressively seeks to undermine faith in science and scientists and to discount expertise at all levels of government and society.

There have been some very high-profile cases of agency scientists and research managers being silenced by reassigning them to offices and jobs unrelated to their expertise. The U.S. Department of Agriculture research and data services are being gutted. The State Department is ignoring advice from CDC scientists, putting American lives at risk. The President himself tried to undermine the critical mission of NOAA to keep Americans safe during severe weather. And sadly, those cases making the news are just the tip of the iceberg. The silencing of experts is happening quietly across the government on a daily basis.

Dr. Droegemeier, I welcome your testimony this morning, but I do not imagine that anyone will walk away from this hearing satisfied. While I believe you are personally committed to a thriving scientific enterprise, the budget proposal before us, and the actions taken to undercut the federal scientific workforce, are not worthy of this great Nation.