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NASAs science program is facing a staggering 47% budget cut in 2026. If enacted, dozens of missions would be terminated, scientific progress halted, and the nation would surrender its leadership in space science.We must push back and protect this unique capability.Take Action Latest Updates Background ResourcesJuly 21, 2025 | 10:55 a.m. ETHundreds of NASA employees formally dissent to premature cutsJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsIn a letter to interim NASA Administrator Sean Duffy, nearly 300 current and former NASA employees expressed formal dissent to the unprecedented, unstrategic, and wasteful cuts to the agency. The letter warns that cuts to the agencys budget and workforce threaten mission safety and the nations global standing in space exploration. The cuts proposed by the Office of Management & Budget have unambiguous opposition in Congress, with legislators advancing budgets that keep level funding for NASA.July 18, 2025 | 4:31 p.m. ETBipartisan letter calls on Acting Administrator Duffy to pause cutsJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsHouse Science Committee Ranking Member Valerie Foushee (D-NC), joined by Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA) and Seth Moulton (D-MA), penned a letter to acting NASA Administrator Sean Duffy to urge him to cease implementation of disastrous cuts that would threaten the scientific integrity, technical expertise, and global standing of the United States. The letter warns that cuts to the Science Mission Directorate and Office of STEM Engagement would undermine opportunities to grow the pool of skilled talent needed to ensure Americas future competitiveness in critical sectors and emerging technologies. The letter goes on to remind the temporary NASA leader that only Congress is tasked in the U.S. Constitution with setting the budget priorities of the nation. A total of 63 Members of Congress signed the letter, including the Co-Chairs of the bipartisanPlanetary Science Caucus, Representatives Don Bacon (R-NE) and Judy Chu (D-CA).July 17, 2025 | 1:27 p.m. PTThe Senate moves to fully-fund NASA and space scienceCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe Senate Appropriations Committee voted to approve its version of NASA's 2026 funding legislation today, which can now be considered by the full Senate. The bill retains NASA's top-line funding level of $24.9 billion and NASA's science at $7.3 billion both the same as in 2025. This is huge news for NASA science, and a complete rejection of the White House's draconian proposal to cut its budget by 47%.The House and Senate funding bills must now be reconciled and then voted on by their full chambers. When that will happen is anyone's guess, but likely not until the fall.July 15, 2025 | 11:15 a.m. PTHouse rejects extinction-level cuts to NASA science proposed by the OMBCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe House's Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) subcommittee on appropriations just moved forward with a 2026 funding bill that rejects the massive cuts to NASA and NASA science proposed by the White House. It would provide $24.9 billion for the agency, equivalent to what it received in 2024.Unfortunately, the House legislation would still cut NASA science by 18% (providing $6 billion in 2026), redirecting funding to the human exploration program. While 18% is far better than the 47% cut initially proposed, we believe that the House should adopt the Senate's position of full funding for science, particularly given the additional funding provided for human spaceflight in the recent "Big, Beautiful Bill" legislation signed into law on July 4th.The Planetary Society released a statement today praising both the House and Senate appropriations committees for putting forward legislation that rejects the unprecedented, unstrategic, wasteful cuts to NASA and NASA science proposed by the Office of Management & Budget (OMB). While there is still a long way to go to ensure the agency's core capabilities are protected, these are very important first steps, and demonstrate that the public outcry against these proposals is having an effect.July 10, 2025 | 3:21 p.m. ETNASA finally releases research opportunities for 2025, Senate hits pause on budget discussionsJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsFive months after the annual release of the Research Opportunities in Space and Earth Sciences (ROSES), NASA finally released a solicitation for proposals to the scientific community. ROSES-25 was expected on February 14th, but uncertainty around science funding caused by the Office of Management & Budget derailed the plans. That budget uncertainty has forced NASA to cut funding for these competitively selected research grants by 80% compared to last years solicitation.Meanwhile, the Senate Appropriations Committee nearly passed a bipartisan budget that included funding for NASA and the National Science Foundation, until a contentious issue regarding the location of the Federal Bureau of Investigation headquarters caused the Committee to recess. Full legislative text is not yet available, but based on opening statements from Subcommittee Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Ranking Member Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), the bill would almost entirely reject the proposed cuts for NASA Science and NSF.July 10, 2025 | 11:06 a.m. ETPresident taps Secretary of Transportation to take over temporary leadership of NASAJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsLate on July 9th, President Trump issued a directive that current acting NASA Administrator, Janet Petro, be replaced immediately by Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy. Petro, Director of the Kennedy Space Center, has been the interim head of the agency since the beginning of the Trump Administration while the Senate consideredand the President later rescindedthe nomination of Jared Isaacman. Duffy, confirmed in a bipartisan 77-22 vote to lead the Department of Transportation, is a former Member of Congress and attorney. This would be the first time that NASA, an independent agency, would be run by the head of another department of the federal government. The President, in his announcement of the change, indicated that the move would be temporary as the administration searches for a new nominee for NASA Administrator.July 7th, 2025 | 10:30 a.m. PTNASA science leaders condemn cuts to NASACasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyIn a joint letter released today, every living former head of NASA's Science Mission Directorate condemned the White House's proposed 47% cuts to NASA science. The signatories John Grunsfeld, Alphonso Diaz, Lennard Fisk, Wesley Huntress, Alan Stern, Edward Weiler, and Thomas Zurbuchen served in every Presidential administration from Reagan to Biden. The letter was transmitted to the leadership of the House and Senate appropriations committees. Read the letter here.July 3rd, 2025 | 11:07 a.m. PTCongressional reconciliation bill rejects major changes to human spaceflight in FY 2026Casey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyH.R. 1, which was voted into law by Congress, is a bill that primarily focuses on taxation and mandatory spending. However, a provision included by Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX) provides $10 billion for NASA. This amount does not support science program. Instead, it funds NASA to build the SLS rockets for Artemis IV and V, the Gateway lunar station, and provides $1 billion for infrastructure improvements at human spaceflight centers around the country. It also backfills funding for the ISS and ISS de-orbit vehicle. Notably, it also provides $700 billion for a Mars telecommunications orbiter to support Mars Sample Return, though Mars Sample Return itself is not funded. Unlike standard appropriations, these funds are available for NASA's use for the next seven years, through 2032.June 26th, 2025 | 5:41 p.m. ETTemporary NASA leadership teases ignoring Congress on budgetJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsBased on leaked audio from a closed-door NASA town hall,Acting Administrator Janet Petro announced that the interim agency leadership is considering a plan to implement the widely opposed cuts to science, human spaceflight, technology development, and STEM education in the event of a continuing resolution (CR). Under a CR, agencies are meant to operate at the last-enacted budget to maintain operations at a stable level while Congress establishes new funding levels. Instructing the agency to instead follow the OMB-drafted budget request would functionally circumvent Congress and enact a budget without their consent. Congress is the sole branch of government responsible for approving expenditures, as outlined in Article I, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution.June 16, 2025 | 7:40 a.m. PTNew op-ed: this anti-consensus Mars proposal will failCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyI wrote an op-ed discussing the big-picture problem with the FY 2026 budget proposal: it breaks the consensus behind Artemis. Without consensus, any long-term human exploration plan will fail:"There are two launch windows to Mars remaining in this administration. For this Mars project to succeed, future presidential administrations and congresses will be required to carry this effort forward; the choice is up to them. If the administration is serious about this Mars goal, it must ensure a coalition is in place to shepherd this transition. But a project borne from such destruction, absent any honest effort at consensus, will face serious backlash."Read the whole thing.June 13, 2025 | 2:40 p.m. ETGlobal petition garners nearly 21,000 signatures, submitted to CongressJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsIn a matter of weeks, our petition to Save NASA Science garnered an astounding 20,787 signatures from around the world. More than 83% of signatures came from the United States; all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C. were represented. Space advocates from 109 countries and territories also signed. The Planetary Society submitted the petition and accompanying signatures to the U.S. Congress this afternoon as formal testimony for the FY 2026 appropriations process.June 10, 2025 | 11:47 a.m. PTVisualizing the threat to NASA and NASA scienceCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyWe've released a new set of high-quality charts and data that detail the unique threat posed to NASA and space science in the 2026 budget proposal. Many of the charts are available below in the Resources section, but we've also prepared a single reference that highlights the key charts, including cuts to the agency, science, and program cancelations: NASA's disastrous 2026 budget proposal in seven charts.June 3, 2025 | 9:47 a.m. ETGlobal petition surpasses signature goal, keeps growingJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsFollowing this weekends tumultuous news about the future of NASA, a spike in signatories has sent theglobal petition to Save NASA Science rocketing past the stated goal of 10,000 signatures. The petition, addressed to the leadership of the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees, demonstrates the immense public support for space science and exploration. To date, the petition has been signed by advocates from every U.S. state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and 100 countries.May 31, 2025 | 4:25 p.m. ETJared Isaacman out as nominee to lead NASAJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsIn a surprise move, the White House just pulled the nomination of tech entrepreneur and private astronaut Jared Isaacman to be NASA Administrator. The rationale, according to a White House spokesperson, is because of a misalignment with the administrations recently announced plans to gut NASA. Isaacman, an ardent believer in NASAs ability to do the impossible, recently won bipartisan support in the U.S. Senate for his views on maintaining American leadership in scientific discovery and space exploration. The Senate was expected to swiftly confirm Isaacman's nomination in early June.May 31, 2025 | 6:28 a.m. ETSee NASA Science's economic impact across the United StatesCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyToday, we're launching a new dashboard to demonstrate the breadth and scope of the economic benefits from NASA's Science activities across the country, both at the state and congressional district levels. It provides high-level summaries and detailed reports customized for each region. It's a great way to help share what NASA science does locally.May 30, 2025 | 4:28 p.m. ETNASA's full FY 2026 budget is releasedCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyNASA posted the full details of the disastrous FY 2026 budget proposal, and we now know the grim details: it would eliminate 1/3 of all science projects, slash the agency's workforce by over 5,000, and reduce the overall budget to levels not seen since 1961. New initiatives for sending humans to Mars, while theoretically welcome, are presented without national justification and absent any effort at consensus-building. Such short-sighted actions will inevitably result in a weak, temporary effort unlikely to last more than one presidential administration. The essence of a wasteful enterprise. The negative consequences to science are profound. The Planetary Society's full statement is available here.May 20, 2025 | 9:35 a.m. PTPlanetary Science Caucus kicks offJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsOn Monday in the ornate foyer of the Rayburn House Office Building, more than 150 congressional staff, space professionals, and Members of Congress kicked off the Planetary Science Caucus in a reception hosted by The Planetary Society. At the start of every Congress, Caucuses must refile their founding paperwork. The Planetary Science Caucus, now in its second year, is officially reorganized and has hit the ground running; organizing against the devastating proposed cuts and rallying bipartisan congressional support for NASAs science missions.Encourage your House Representative and Senators to join the Caucus to help grow the movement to Save NASA Science in Congress.May 17, 2025 | 7:21 a.m. PTPlanetary Science Caucus-led congressional letter for NASA Science gets 83 signatories in the House of RepresentativesCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe "Dear Colleague" letter led by the Planetary Science Caucus co-Chairs Don Bacon (R-RE) and Judy Chu (D-CA) garnered 83 signatories from their colleagues in the House of Representatives. The letter, which called for a restoration of NASA's Science Mission Directorate to $9 billion, received co-signers from roughly 20% of the entire House of Representatives spanning 28 states and members of both parties. You can read the letter and see the full list of signatories here.May 15, 2025 | 4:21 p.m. PTPlanetary defense is funded by NASA science, tooCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe House Space & Aeronautics Subcommittee held ahearing on Planetary Defense, one of the core areas of interest here at The Planetary Society. We took the opportunity tosubmit a letter for the record, highlighting the amazing progress of this field in the past 20 years, but reminding the committee that this activity is funded by NASA Science, which is facing a 47% cut next year. Its a good reminder: funding science isnt just about the value of discovery; its in our self-interest.May 14, 2025 | 9:20 a.m. PTEveryone can sign our new petition in support of NASA and space scienceJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsIn mid-June, the U.S. Congress is expected to begin official deliberations on the NASA budget for FY 2026. To show policymakers the immense public support for NASA and space science during this critical moment, The Planetary Society has launched an online petition. Unlike our direct congressional messages, signing the petition is not limited to U.S. residents. Space advocates from around the globe are encouraged to sign.May 6, 2025 | 9:39 a.m. PTSignatories more than double as official budget cuts come into viewJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsIn the span of less than one week, the number of signatories on the joint letter to Congress has doubled to 18. The list now includes the Scientific Society for Astrobiology, the Aspiring Martians podcast, Maryland Aerospace Alliance, Mars Foundation, National Space Society, Agnostic Life Finding Association, Satellite Industry Association, and the letters first student signatory, the Aggie Space Initiative at University of California, Davis. This influx of support from throughout the country represents the growing public rebuke of the reckless cuts to NASA and the U.S. science enterprise being proposed by the Office of Management & Budget, officially announced last Friday.May 2, 2025 | 11:54 a.m. PTPlanetary Society condemns historic cuts to NASACasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe Planetary Society released its official statement on the FY 2026 White House NASA budget proposal: "Slashing NASAs budget by this much, this quickly, without the input of a confirmed NASA Administrator or in response to a considered policy goal, wont make the agency more efficient it will cause chaos, waste the taxpayers investment, and undermine American leadership in space."May 2, 2025 | 7:30 a.m. PTOMB proposes to gut NASAon National Space Day, no lessJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsThe skinny version of thePresidents Budget Request has been released. In it, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) breaks with the Administrations past support of NASA andproposes the single largest cut to the agencys budget in American history. The request highlights the withdrawal of support from the space workforce, leading space institutions and centers, and programs like NASAs education and infrastructure accounts. Mars Sample Return, a mission that is the top priority of the planetary science community, the next flagship for the China National Space Agency, and a penultimate step to human exploration of Mars, is declared cancelled.May 1, 2025 | 7:30 a.m. PTMomentum grows as two additional signatories added to letterJack Kiraly, Director of Government RelationsFollowing the release of the joint letter urging Congress to reject drastic cuts to NASA, two leading science organizations have joined the effort. The Open Lunar Foundation and the American Geophysical Union have joined as signatories, bringing the total number to ten. As we await further information about the budget, its clear that across the space community, cuts to NASA undermine American leadership in space.April 30, 2025 | 6:27 a.m. PTIndustry, scientific, and public interest orgs speak up for scienceCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe Planetary Society and a coalition of major industry, scientific, and public-interest organizations released a joint letter today, urging congressional leaders to push back against the potential cuts to space science. The letter, initially signed by the American Astronomical Society, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the Coalition for Deep Space Exploration, the Commercial Space Federation, Explore Mars, Inc., The Mars Society, and the Planetary Science Institute, can beread here.April 23, 2025 | 2:46 p.m. PTMore Republicans speak out against NASA science cutsCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyTwo former Republican members of Congress, Newt Gingrich and Bob Walker, and the Trump Administration's transition team, Charles Miller, released an op-ed calling the proposed cuts to NASA science "reckless" and stating that "world class science at NASA is also critically important to humanitys future in space." This is an important statement, emphasizing that reversing these cuts is a nonpartisan issue.April 21, 2025 | 10:39 a.m. PTThe Planetary Society raises awareness of space science cuts in the New York TimesCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe New York Times published my guest essay today, about the potential threat to NASAs space science and how it could impact the search for life, undermine our national interest, and represent a symbolic retreat of shared American values. You can read it here.April 15, 2025 | 10:17 a.m. PTLetter supporting NASA science circulates CongressCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyThe Co-Chairs of the Planetary Science Caucus, Reps. Don Bacon (R-NE) and Judy Chu (D-CA), are circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter among the House of Representatives that calls for a restoration of NASA Science funding to $9 billion the inflation-adjusted level reached under the first Trump Administration. You can read the letter here. If you live in the United States, consider writing to your representative asking them to co-sign this letter. We have a pre-written message you can send via our online action center.April 12, 2025 | 8:30 a.m. PTCongressional leaders speak out against cuts to NASA scienceCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyMembers of both parties have spoken out against the potential cuts to NASA science. The Co-Chairs of the congressional Planetary Science Caucus, Reps. Don Bacon (R-NE) and Judy Chu (D-CA), saying that "We will work closely with our colleagues in Congress on a bipartisan basis to push back against these proposed cuts". Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), Ranking Member on the House Science Committee, stated, "I will do everything in my power to ensure these reckless proposals never come to fruition." Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee of Appropriations, vowed to "fight tooth and nail against these cuts and to protect the critical work being done at NASA Goddard".April 11, 2025 | 7:29 a.m. PTNear-final passback budget shows 50% cuts to NASA scienceCasey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyPassback is when the Office of Management and Budget the White House's accounting arm provides a near-final budget proposal to NASA prior to its official release. It's not set in stone, but it's very close to being so. Today, reporting indicates that NASA's passback decimates science: a 50% cut, falling particularly hard on Astrophysics (cut by 70%) and Earth Science (-53%). Planetary Science and Heliophysics suffer cuts that, in any other year, would be considered extraordinary: X and X, respectively.The reporting, unfortunately, was true. There is still time for the White House to reconsider, but this is a very bad sign.April 7, 2025 | 11:04 a.m. PTActing NASA Administrator calls science cuts "rumors"Casey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyJanet Petro, acting NASA Administrator, was asked about the potential cuts at a public event in Colorado, according to SpaceNews. From the article: "she said she has not received any information on the administrations plans for its fiscal year 2026 budget proposal, other than 'rumors from really not credible sources.'" Not exactly a denial, but perhaps a good sign.March 26, 2025 | 1:27 p.m. PTThe Planetary Society advocates for NASA in D.C.By Casey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyMore than 100 members of The Planetary Society gathered in Washington, D.C. yesterday to engage their members of Congress in support of NASA science and exploration. While no developments have occurred in the official FY 2026 budget, we remain concerned regarding reports of proposed cuts.March 7, 2025 | 3:04 p.m. ETCuts of up to 50% for NASA's Science Mission Directorate are being reportedBy Casey Dreier, Chief of Space PolicyEric Berger of Ars Technica reported today that the White House is considering cuts of up to 50% for NASA's Science Mission Directorate. If true, this would be an unprecedented cut to NASA's science activities, and inevitably require dozens of active missions to be switched off, a functional freeze on new projects, and the end of NASA science as we know it. The Planetary Society issued an initial statement strongly rejecting such actions, and will be ready to engage stakeholders of both parties to push back against any cuts, should they be proposed.As part of this commitment, we have created this running page to track updates and developments on this issue. On May 30th, 2025, the White House released its official 2026 spending proposal for NASA, which proposes the smallest NASA since FY 1961, $18.8 billion, a 25% cut from the previous year.The cuts are wide-ranging, but primarily focused on NASA's science activities, which account for over half of the overall reduction and represent a single-year cut of 47%.FY 2024*FY 2026 PBRChange %Change $Earth Science$2,187M$1,035.9M-53%-$1,151MPlanetary Science$2,716M$1,891.3M-30%-$824.9MAstrophysics$1,530M$523M-66%-$1,006.7MHeliophysics$805M$432.5M-45%-$372.5MScience Total$7,334M$3,907.6M-47%-$3,426.6M* As of writing, final FY 2025 funding details had not been released.The consequences of this budget, should it be enacted, are severe. It ends 41 in-development and active NASA science projects, roughly a third of NASA's entire science portfolio. All Venus missions, including DAVINCI, VERITAS, and the U.S. contribution to ESA's EnVision mission, are cancelled. The Roman Space Telescope nearly completed is needlessly delayed with reduced funding, which would only add to the overall cost of the project. Billions of dollars of investments in unique assets and capabilities would be wasted.The budget proposes reducing NASA's workforce by nearly 1/3, with nearly 2/3 cuts at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. The lack of projects threatens the financial stability of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. There would simply be no missions for them to work on.The Planetary Society and other organizations have characterized the proposal as an "extinction-level event" that would usher in a functional dark age for NASA science.What happens nextCongress, which is responsible for approving expenditures from the U.S. treasury, must pass appropriations before October 1st, 2026, the start of the U.S. government's fiscal year.The Senate and House must approve budget resolutions for the coming year, which provide overall spending levels. The 12 appropriations committees will write out legislation for each federal agency, a process that is currently expected to begin in mid-July. Should Congress fail to pass the relevant appropriations bills by October 1st, a continuing resolution (CR) is typically enacted to provide temporary funding and prevent a government shutdown.While a CR nominally maintains funding at the previous year's levels, it does not guarantee that NASA can access or spend those funds. OMB retains the authority to apportion funds, and tends to do so at a level commensurate with the lowest of all possible budget scenarios. Therefore, even under a CR, OMB could impose the drastic cuts to NASA Science outlined in the budget proposal, severely impacting missions and research programs unless Congress acts swiftly and decisively.Closing our eyes to the cosmos NASA's Juno mission at Jupiter is one of the nearly two-dozen active missions slated for termination in this proposal.Image: NASA / SwRIResourcesBackground and Talking PointsOfficial Statements and Congressional LettersView and download economic impact information for every state and congressional district that benefits from NASA's science activities.In 1984 NASA had a far less ambitious program of scientific exploration. Earth science was not yet a discipline, planetary science was nearly non-existent, and only a handful of missions were in development.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data No science is spared. Each of NASA's four major science divisions is facing a draconian cut to its budget, with some reaching historical lows. Values are adjusted for inflation.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data The proposed FY 2026 budget would cancel 19 NASA science missions that are currently active, healthy, and producing invaluable science. These represent a cumulative investment of over $12 billion and years of work to design and build. These are irreplaceable assets.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data Never has a White House budget proposed this scale of budget cut, this quickly. Should it be implemented, NASA's budget would fall to its lowest level since Alan Shepard became the first American in space.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data Of NASA's various mission and management directorates, only Exploration (which manages human spaceflight to the Moon and, maybe, Mars) would grow in the President's FY 2026 proposal. Every other activity would see a substantial reduction, with Science being cut nearly in half.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data Under the FY 2026 White House budget proposal, NASA's civil servant workforce (as measured by FTEs, or Full-Time Equivalent hours) would fall to its lowest levels since FY 1960.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data The relative change is measured by comparing the White House budget request for NASA to the prior years' congressionally appropriated amount. The FY 2026 proposed budget cut is significantly larger than any other proposed reduction in NASA's history.Download Options: SVG Wide | SVG Narrow | PNG Wide | PNG Narrow | PPTX | CSV Data For questions or inquiries, contact Casey Dreier: .Sign up for our monthly Space Policy newsletter, updates, and exclusive opportunities to support space exploration.You may opt out any time. View our Privacy Policy. The White House has proposed the largest single-year cut to NASA in American history.It would recklessly slash NASAs science budget by 47%, forcing widespread terminations of functional missions worth billions of dollars.Slashing NASAs budget by this much, this quickly, without the input of a confirmed NASA Administrator or in response to a considered policy goal, wont make the agency more efficient it will cause chaos, waste the taxpayers investment, and undermine American leadership in space.Additionally, this budget, as overseen by OMB Director Russ Vought, is not supportive of President Trumps own stated goal that America mustlead the way in fueling the pursuit of space discovery and exploration. The OMBs budget proposal is fundamentally at odds with the Presidents vision for American space leadership.We urge Congress to swiftly reject this destructive proposal and instead pursue a path consistent with the Presidents vision. This is an opportunity for bipartisan agreement to secure an efficient, capable, and balanced national space program worthy of the nation it aims to represent.The Planetary Society is deeply alarmed by reports that the White House will propose a 50% cut to NASAs science activities in the upcoming agency budget request. Such a substantial collapse of funding could functionally surrender American leadership in scientific space exploration. It could also shatter the nations science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) educational pipeline, and decimate the worlds most capable and accomplished scientific and engineering workforce.Should these cuts come to pass, the result would be nothing short of an extinction event for space science and exploration in the United States.We urge the White House to reconsider its approach to funding the worlds most capable exploration agency. We urge Congress to continue their decades of bipartisan support for these unique activities only NASA funds exploration science missions in the United States.The Planetary Society stands ready to work with all stakeholders to ensure the United States continues to lead the world in the ambitious, inspirational, scientifically exciting, and technologically innovative exploration of the Cosmos enabled by its space science missions and workforce.Pasadena, CA (December 17, 2024) The Planetary Society, the worlds largest independent space interest organization, commends the work of the Planetary Science Caucus in leading a bipartisan letter supporting a higher topline and addressing the challenges facing NASA as part of the fiscal year 2025 budget negotiations. The letter, addressed to House and Senate appropriations leadership, is signed by 22 elected representatives from 10 states and the District of Columbia. The letter is availablehere.Letters like this, with the support of a diverse coalition of members of Congress, are indicative of the far-reaching and unifying nature of space exploration, said The Planetary Societys Chief of Space Policy Casey Dreier. We are grateful for the work of the Planetary Science Caucus to advance a vision of a strong space exploration program that unites people around the world in the pursuit of groundbreaking discoveries, expands humanitys understanding of the Universe, and inspires future generations.In announcing the letter, Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA) and Co-Chair Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) reiterated that Congress has the responsibilityand the opportunityto restore federal funding and ensure that NASA and its commercial partners have sufficient resources to meet national priorities, safeguard our scientific progress, maintain our world-class workforce, and expand our understanding of the Universe and Earths place within it.This letter comes at a critical time, as Congress negotiates funding levels for FY 2025. NASA is facing unprecedented budgetary pressures due to inflation and federal spending cuts, which have resulted in delays, cancellations, and growing challenges to maintaining the nations leadership in space science and exploration. The letter underscores the importance of reversing this trend by prioritizing investments in NASA and its Science Mission Directorate.The incoming Trump Administration and the 119th Congress will have an opportunity to shape NASAs trajectory during this pivotal period. By providing the necessary funding and direction, they can ensure that NASA continues to serve as a vital public institution that leverages commercial innovation and international collaboration to advance scientific knowledge. As a cornerstone of U.S. leadership in space exploration, NASA not only inspires the world but also fuels innovation, serves as an economic engine, and strengthens the United States global leadership.The Planetary Society strongly opposes the sudden, indiscriminate dismissal of upwards of 1,000 scientists, engineers, and explorers at NASA the largest involuntary workforce reduction since the end of the Apollo program. While we recognize the value of improved efficiency and structural optimization, any workforce changes should be in service of improving the agencys ability to execute its mission. Indiscriminate layoffs do not serve this purpose.These public servants many of whom are just starting their careers represent the future of NASA. Their removal does not reflect their abilities or commitment to advancing U.S. interests in space, only that they chose to join the nations space agency within the past year.We urge the Trump Administration to reverse this arbitrary decision and work with Congress and other stakeholders to define a clear strategy for continued U.S. leadership in space and to ensure the nations space agency has the workforce necessary to succeed in its mission.Highlights from 45 years of science and technology projectsWritten by Kate HowellsPublic Education Specialist, The Planetary Society January 30, 2025Since our founding in 1980, The Planetary Society has been working to advance space science and exploration by engaging and empowering the public. One avenue through which weve pursued this goal is byactively participating in missions led by space agencies around the world and through our own pioneering research and technology development.From funding early Mars rover testing to naming planetary bodies and developing sample return technologies, Planetary Society members have funded contributions to more than 20 missions over the past 45 years.Sending names into space Engineers on the IKAROS solar sailing mission prepare to mount a DVD containing the names of more than 68,000 people, provided through a partnership between The Planetary Society and the Japanese space agency JAXA.Image: JAXAIn the early 1980s, The Planetary Society began exploring its potential role in science and technology projects. We provided funding for the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI) and for a new technique to search for exoplanets. We also tested a novel concept for a Mars balloon that would fly long distances at low altitudes in the atmosphere of the red planet.In 1992, the organization conducted some of the earliest Mars rover tests in Californias Death Valley, bringing together scientists and engineers from Russia, the United States, France, and Hungary. This collaboration helped pave the way for the Mars rovers that would later explore the Martian surface.The popularity of these projects among members encouraged the Societys founders Carl Sagan, Louis Friedman, and Bruce Murray to explore more active involvement in space exploration.Taking our place in spaceThroughout the 1990s, The Planetary Society began developing our own space-based experiments. The first privately funded experiments to go to another planet were Planetary Society projects: a radiation-measuring device on NASAs Pathfinder Mars mission and amicrophone on the Mars Polar Lander.Although the latters mission ended in failure when the spacecraft crashed in 1999, the project was just the beginning of the Societys efforts to capture audio from other worlds. In 2005, we helped the European Space Agency processaudio data from its Huygens probe after it descended to the surface of Saturn's moon Titan. Thegoal of capturing sound from Mars was finally realized in 2021 when NASAs Perseverance rover transmitted the first sounds from the Martian surface.Another innovative Planetary Society project was theLiving Interplanetary Flight Experiment, or LIFE, which was designed to investigate the potential for life to travel from planet to planet. The Planetary Society funded the development of a biomodule to carry a selection of microorganisms to deep space and back.The LIFE Biomodule The Planetary Society's LIFE biomodule, part of the Phobos Sample Return Mission, contained ten organism samples.Image: Bruce Betts/The Planetary SocietyA proof-of-concept experiment flew aboard space shuttle Endeavour in 2011, followed up by sending a biomodule aboard the Phobos-Grunt spacecraft in 2012, which was planned to have been a 34-month voyage to Mars' moon Phobos and back but unfortunately failed shortly after launch.Setting sailOne of The Planetary Societys most ambitious undertakings was a project to build and fly our own spacecraft. Co-founders Lou Friedman and Carl Sagan were fascinated by the concept of solar sailing propelling a spacecraft using giant sails that harnessed the momentum of sunlight. Through member funding and in collaboration with Russian scientists, the Society designed and builtCosmos 1, the worlds very first solar sail spacecraft.The mission ended tragically in 2005 when the rocket launching Cosmos 1 failed, but The Planetary Societys solar sailing dreams werent quashed. The work continued, and in 2015, The Planetary Society's LightSail 1 spacecraft completed a successful test flight in low Earth orbit. In 2019,LightSail 2 launched and succeeded at using sunlight alone to change its orbit around Earth. It performed the first controlled solar sailing with a small spacecraft.LightSail 2's Final Image This image taken by The Planetary Society's LightSail 2 spacecraft on Oct. 24, 2022 was the final image returned from the spacecraft before atmospheric reentry.Image: The Planetary SocietyWhile working on its own ambitious projects, The Planetary Society also continued to find new ways for its members to participate in agencies space missions. In partnership with NASA, the Society contributed toMAPEX, a microelectronics chip that carried thousands of members names to Mars aboard the Pathfinder mission in 1996. This was the first time a mission carried the names of members of the public to another planet the first of many.The Planetary Society has helped send names, messages, images, and good wishes aboardmore than a dozen spacecraft. To date, we've sent our members and supporters to the Moon, Venus, Mars, Saturn, asteroids, comets, Pluto, and out of the Solar System entirely. In some cases, we built the hardware used to carry the names into space. In others, we partnered with other groups to collect names. We also sent a digital library to Mars on a DVD aboard NASAs Phoenix mission, carrying a collection of 19th and 20th-century science fiction stories, essays, and art inspired by the red planet.Writing postcards to space At a Planetary Society event, members of the public were invited to write postcards that would fly to space aboard Blue Origins New Shepard rocket.Image: Jason Dixon for The Planetary SocietyThe Planetary Society also has a long history of engaging the public in choosing the names of spacecraft and celestial bodies. We helped run contests to choose the names of the Magellan Venus orbiter, the Mars rovers Spirit, Opportunity, and Soujourner, the asteroids Braille and Bennu, and Earths quasi-moon Cardea.Many of those naming contests specifically engaged students, and getting kids involved in space missions has been an important part of The Planetary Societys work. One notable example of this wasRed Rover Goes to Mars, a project in the early 2000s in which we gave teams of students opportunities to directly interact with Mars rovers operating the camera aboard the Mars Global Surveyor mission, operating the prototype FIDO rover, and even working inside mission operations at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory while Spirit and Opportunity explored the red planet.The Planetary Society has served many times as an official education and outreach partner for space missions, oftentimes in the form of collecting names, sending messages aboard the spacecraft, or naming a target. In one partnership, for theMastcam-Z camera on NASA's Perseverance rover, we also had the opportunity to design a series of icons on the primary image calibration target for the camera, which is now on Mars.Perseverance rover primary calibration target This image shows the primary image calibration target for NASA's Perseverance Mars rover. The target, which was designed with the help of The Planetary Society, contains a motto, graphics, and a sundial.Image: NASA/JPL-Caltech/ASU/Univ. CopenhagenIn recent decades, The Planetary Society has engaged members to fund the development of new technologies with the potential to advance space exploration.One such project wasPlanetVac, which the Society developed in collaboration with Honeybee Robotics. PlanetVac is a low-cost, high-reliability sample collection system designed to increase the science return from missions to other worlds. PlanetVac works by firing a blast of gas into the surface, stirring sample material into a collection container for onboard analysis or return to Earth.In 2013, Planetary Society members helped fund a lab test of PlanetVac in a simulated Martian atmosphere, and in 2018 helped Honeybee take the technology out on a real-world test flight in California's Mojave Desert, where it successfully collected 332 grams of simulated Martian soil. These tests proved that PlanetVac was suitable for real missions, and the technology is now in space. PlanetVac is part of Firefly Aerospaces Blue Ghost mission to the Moon, part of NASA's Commercial Lunar Payload Services program. A modified PlanetVac will also fly to Mars moon Phobos aboard Japan's Martian Moons eXplorer mission, or MMX, due to launch in 2026.Lunar PlanetVac up close A close-up of the Lunar PlanetVac instrument, part of the Blue Ghost 1 mission to land on the Moon. Photo taken at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama.Image: NASA / Firefly AerospaceThe Planetary Society also worked with Honeybee Robotics on thePlanetary Deep Drillproject, which aims to create lightweight, portable drills capable of probing deep beneath planetary surfaces. By funding field tests in California and Greenland, the Society has helped prove the drills potential for future missions. Another technology weve helped test isLaser Bees, which uses laser ablation as a method for deflecting asteroids. The Planetary Society and our members helped fund original research to test this technique in the laboratory, demonstrating that laser ablation is a promising deflection capability and significantly improving theoretical models to advance future work on the technology.The future is brightThe Planetary Societys science and technology program continues to this day to fund innovative projects that will no doubt help shape the future of space science and exploration. In 2022, The Planetary Society launched theSTEP (Science and Technology Empowered by the Public) grant program. These grants are funding the development of a new citizen science SETI project, a novel technique to study near-Earth asteroids, research on growing edible plants in simulated deep-space conditions, and the study of salty lakes on Earth that may share similarities with oceans of other worlds.As space exploration continues to uncover new things about the Cosmos and our place within it, you can be sure that The Planetary Society and our members will have a role to play.Support the team of astronomers defending Earth with a gift today.Donate Read more: Cosmos-1, Laser Bees, LightSail, LightSail 1, LightSail 2, Past contests, Phobos and Shuttle LIFE, Planetary Deep Drill, Planetary Microphones, Planetary Society, Planetary Society active projects, Planetary Society names things, Planetary Society past projects, Planetary Society solar sails, PlanetVac, Red Rover Goes to Mars, Solar sailing, Space technology, Space topics, STEP Grants You are here: Home > ArticlesEmpowering the world's citizens to advance space science and exploration.Account Center Contact Us Privacy PolicyGive with confidence. The Planetary Society is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. 2025 The Planetary Society. All rights reserved.Cookie DeclarationWhen I wrote the advocacy update for theJune issue of the Planetary Report, I could not have imagined the ongoing success of our advocacy efforts this year. But given that NASA and the entire American space program are facing anextinction-level crisis, this shouldnt be too surprising. As we approach the midpoint of the year, I am excited to report that 2025 has been a banner year for space advocacy with the launch of our Save NASA Science Campaign.Since January 1 of this year, weve held more events, appeared in more publications, facilitated more messages to Congress, and engaged more members of the public than at any other point in the Society's recent history.The advocacy for Europa Clipper might be the only other campaign that beats the sheer number of actions taken to support scientific discovery and space exploration, but that benefited from ample lead-time and planning. The Save NASA Science Campaign has come together organically in reaction to the existential threat to space science, but has now shifted to be a forward-looking effort to