

“The Destruction of NASA’s Mission”

Whistleblowers reveal OMB’s Unconstitutional Plot to Gut the Agency



U.S. Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
MARIA CANTWELL, Ranking Member

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Whistleblowers Reveal OMB’s Unconstitutional Plot to Gut the Agency

NASA stunned the world and inspired generations on the day Americans first set foot on the moon. Since then, NASA’s breakthroughs and discoveries have superpowered America’s innovation economy, achieved global leadership in space technology, leveraged earth sciences to protect the American public from natural disasters, and pushed the boundaries of knowledge about the origins of our universe with stunning images collected by space-based telescopes. NASA has always been, at its core, an elite science agency.

NASA’s motto is fittingly “For the Benefit of All.” We all benefit from NASA’s research and technology development that leads to ever more capable weather satellites. For example, next generation National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO) satellites, as developed by NASA, include new instruments that greatly improve the ability to forecast severe weather events and detect wildfires—saving lives and preventing further destruction when disasters hit.

We all benefit from NASA’s Earth science satellites, which track drought conditions, inform emergency response operations, and fortify national resilience. And we all benefit from NASA’s fundamental research that continuously expands our understanding of the cosmos. For a quarter-century, the Chandra X-Ray Telescope, one of NASA’s “Great Observatories,” has collected invaluable data on black holes, supernovas, dark matter, and stellar evolution.

Today, all of this progress is at risk. While our nation is rightly focused on winning the race against China to return to the moon, it would be a Pyrrhic victory to simply plant another American flag on the lunar surface without staying to establish a U.S. base and carry out the science and experiments that are an essential part of NASA’s mission. We need this permanent presence to foster the innovations that will enable the next era of space exploration and utilization to benefit all of humanity. There is simply no winning the space race without fully funding NASA science, research, and development.

As part of Ranking Member Cantwell’s oversight of the potential impacts of President Trump’s budget request (PBR) for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26), Democratic staff on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation have uncovered evidence of an illegal plot already in motion. Based on whistleblower documents and interviews, this staff report finds that the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has been directing NASA—since early summer—to begin implementing the devastating cuts demanded in President Trump’s *proposed* budget for FY26, in clear violation of the Constitution and without regard for the impacts on NASA’s science missions and workforce.

While this report documents the illegal destruction happening at NASA, there can be no doubt the Trump Administration is trying to execute similar plans at agencies across the federal government.¹

Key Findings

NASA Has Been Implementing the President's Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Cuts Since Early Summer—In Clear Violation of the Constitution

- As early as June 2025, NASA began “**implementing immediately**” certain “**institutional changes**” to align with the President’s proposed budget—which carries no force of law.
- NASA Chief of Staff Brian Hughes is enforcing OMB’s directive to actively implement the President’s FY26 budget request. It has been made clear to NASA employees that “**they are doing the PBR**” and “**if it’s not in the PBR, it does not count.**”
- OMB Director Russell Vought’s budgetary end game is to use impoundment to illegally implement the President’s proposed budget at NASA, while ignoring congressional funding levels. Internal agency notes provided by a whistleblower reveal this plot: “**If there is a CR, impoundment is likely going to get on the table as a mechanism to get to the PBR.**”

The Administration is Hiding OMB’s Budget Directives

- The Trump Administration’s effort to defy the Constitution and unilaterally implement sweeping cuts to NASA is “**all under wraps,**” “**nothing is written down,**” and “**all avenues of communication have been shut down.**”

The New Culture of Fear at NASA Jeopardizes Safety and Security

- NASA whistleblowers have “**already seen safety impacts**” from the implementation of the President’s budget request, with one whistleblower warning they were “**very concerned that we’re going to see an astronaut death within a few years.**”

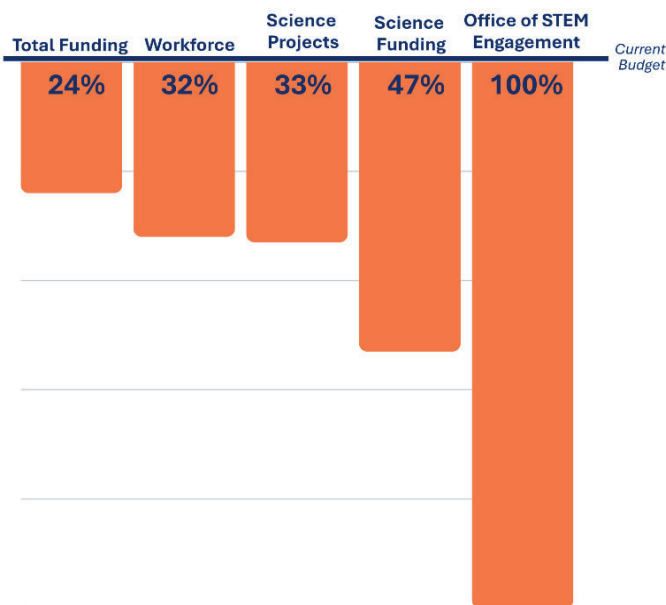
President’s Budget Cuts Will Kneecap the U.S. Innovation Economy

- Beyond NASA, the President’s proposed budget would result in a loss of more than **\$46 billion in economic output, 860 fewer PhD STEM graduates, and 10,700 fewer U.S. researchers**—a significant gut punch to American scientific leadership.

A Bipartisan History Meets a Partisan Power Grab: Ending NASA As We Know It

While NASA has traditionally thrived from bipartisan Congressional funding, the Trump Administration’s budget request for FY26 poses a dire threat to the United States’ leadership in science and technology—slashing NASA’s budget by nearly a quarter, its workforce by nearly a third, and the agency’s science funding by nearly half. The Trump Administration’s vision reflects an undeniable attack on NASA’s science mission, legacy, and bipartisan congressional priorities.

FY26 Proposed Budget Cuts

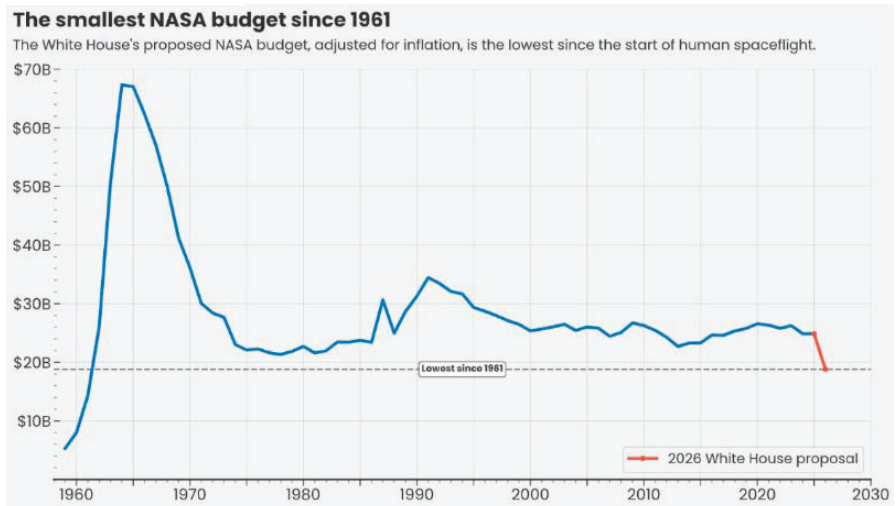


All told, the Administration is calling for the smallest NASA budget since 1961. In announcing the President’s budget proposal, OMB, led by Director Russell Vought, claimed the proposed budget “refocuses” NASA and “would streamline the NASA workforce,” among other purported goals.²

In contrast, the Senate’s bipartisan FY26 appropriations bill rejects the dangerous cuts to science and research sought by the White House. Senate Republicans have elsewhere indicated they do not support gutting NASA’s budget like the White House is proposing.³ But OMB Director Vought has made clear he will exploit every inch of ambiguity and disregard every norm to achieve his predetermined aims—including by

threatening mass firings of federal workers in an attempt to intimidate Congress.⁴

As detailed below, it appears Vought’s tactics also include unilaterally implementing the devastating cuts to NASA that President Trump demanded in his FY26 PBR irrespective of Congress—a sweeping power grab that likely extends beyond this one agency.



NASA Has Been Implementing the President's Proposed FY26 Budget Cuts Since Early Summer—In Clear Violation of the Constitution

Whistleblower reports and records obtained by Committee Democratic staff demonstrate that OMB and other Trump Administration officials are illegally usurping Congress's power of the purse by directing NASA to begin implementing President Trump's budget request for FY26 during the current fiscal year. As a result, NASA has been implementing institutional changes to align with the President's proposed budget—which carries no force of law, cannot override existing spending laws, and has no legal impact on funding appropriated by Congress.⁵

“If Congress has given us authority that is too broad, then we’re going to use that authority aggressively.”

- OMB Director,
Russell Vought

Since the start of this Administration, OMB Director Vought has deployed dubious tactics and erroneous legal theories under the guise of fiscal reform to attack programs and priorities passed by Congress that the Administration does not support. And Director Vought has repeatedly made clear that he believes the White House has the inherent power to impound taxpayer funds—despite the Government Accountability Office, the Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel, and the U.S. Supreme Court all disavowing this theory.⁶

Reflecting this view, OMB issued guidance to agencies in August 2025 claiming the White House has unprecedented authority to cancel or delay appropriated spending—including declaring the Administration can pause funding if a program does not “align with Administration policy.”⁷

“If it’s not in the PBR, it does not count.”

- NASA whistleblower

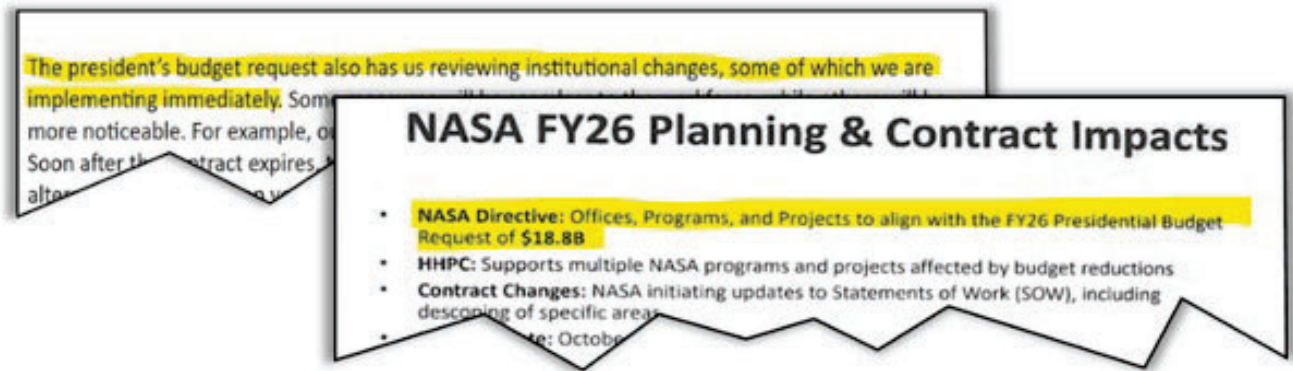
Recently, Director Vought broadcast his plan to defy Congressional intent and take a mile if it gives an inch: “If Congress has given us authority that is too broad, then we’re going to use that authority aggressively.”⁸

According to a NASA whistleblower, this approach is being executed at NASA through Chief of Staff Brian Hughes, who has been leading the effort to actively implement the PBR. The whistleblower recounted how Mr. Hughes told agency employees earlier this year that NASA would begin implementing the President's budget request, without any act of Congress, because it is supposedly the “responsible thing to do.”⁹ Another NASA whistleblower detailed how their branch manager reiterated Mr. Hughes's direction, telling them “multiple times that they are doing the PBR.” One of these whistleblowers also revealed that agency career staff were instructed: “If it's not in the PBR, it does not count.”

Whistleblower documents obtained by Committee Democratic staff corroborate these accounts. On June 12, 2025—less than two weeks after the Trump Administration released its complete FY26 PBR—a NASA Center Director sent a Center-wide email confirming that the President’s budget request “has us reviewing institutional changes, some of which we are implementing immediately.”¹⁰

Approximately one week later, an agency-wide message from the then-Acting Administrator acknowledged that leadership was “acting now” on the President’s budget request for FY26, notwithstanding concerns about “whether we should wait to see how Congress acts.”¹¹

The then-Acting Administrator reiterated this directive to begin implementing the PBR in a June 27, 2025, message, stating, “we have to begin preparing to align our workforce and resources now to meet the mission priorities it outlines.”¹²



A leaked internal NASA workforce reduction planning document further revealed how the agency has directed Offices, Programs, and Projects “to align with the FY26 Presidential Budget Request of \$18.8B”—not any budget approved by Congress¹³

“NASA’s legal office should know better.”

- NASA whistleblower

The Constitution is clear: The executive branch cannot unilaterally impose a president’s desired budget that has not been approved by Congress. Multiple NASA whistleblowers with decades of experience working at the agency across Administrations echoed this

fundamental constitutional principle, with one whistleblower emphasizing: “NASA’s legal office should know better. They should know that what this Administration is doing is breaking NASA procedures, NASA regulations, and not following the will of Congress.”

The Trump Administration is Hiding OMB's Budget Directives

Meanwhile, it appears the Administration is taking steps to conceal its efforts to implement the President's proposed budget irrespective of Congress and the Constitution. According to information obtained by Committee Democratic staff, apart from some initial communications early in the summer, NASA leadership has not issued guidance or other formal communication to its workforce detailing specific plans for the agency's budget and is generally avoiding communicating the Administration's plans in writing.

"All avenues of communication have been shut down."

- NASA whistleblower

One NASA whistleblower told Committee Democratic staff: "It's all under wraps. They're not doing town halls anymore. Nothing is written down." Another NASA whistleblower emphasized that "all avenues of communication have been shut down" and said they are "not allowed to ask questions" or "talk to anyone above

[their] supervisor"—including anyone in NASA's human resources office, which the whistleblower described as "wild."

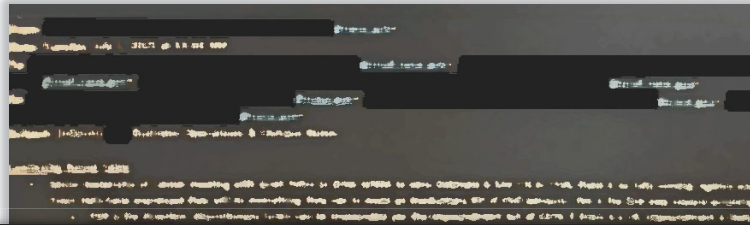
Attempting to enforce any such directive would appear to potentially violate several federal laws, including civil service laws prohibiting retaliation against protected disclosures, workplace safety laws prohibiting interference in reporting unsafe workplace conditions, and whistleblower protection statutes.¹⁴

Another NASA whistleblower told Committee Democratic staff that "compliance with the PBR seems to be driven by threats to high level leaders" coming from OMB or other political leadership. The whistleblower said that NASA employees "have been told to get in line with the PBR or lose their job or position."

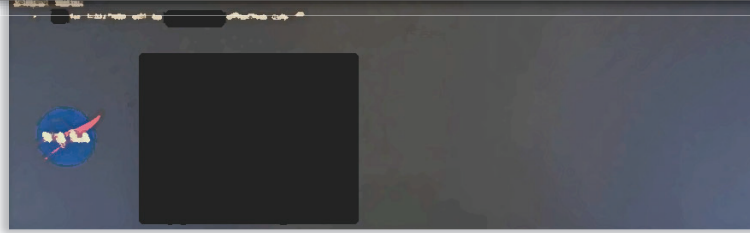
According to multiple NASA whistleblowers, a general sentiment across the agency is: "No one is coming to save us."

Although key information is apparently being withheld from the broader NASA workforce, a July 1, 2025, email provided by a NASA whistleblower appears to shed light on the Administration's true plans.

Another NASA whistleblower lamented that students on NASA-funded projects were being actively turned away from joining the agency, while multiple interns they were mentoring in the NASA Pathways program, which offers a direct pipeline to full-time employment at NASA upon graduation, had been fired. The whistleblower concluded: "There is no longer a path for someone to come work at NASA when they grow up." Another NASA whistleblower put it plainly: "The pipeline is now closed."



“PBR is the direction. Discretionary funds can be impounded per the Impoundment Act of 1974. If there is a CR, impoundment is likely going to get on the table as a mechanism to get to the PBR.”



According to information obtained by Committee Democratic staff, the email memorializes a meeting during which NASA leadership was told that the “PBR is the direction” being imposed on the agency—and, echoing Director Vought, that “Discretionary funds can be impounded per the Impoundment Act of 1974.” The meeting notes then appear to reveal the Administration’s end game: “If there is a CR, impoundment is likely going to get on the table as a mechanism to get to the PBR.”¹⁵

In other words, it appears the Trump Administration plans to use impoundment to illegally impose the sweeping cuts to NASA sought in the President’s proposed budget—in defiance of the Constitution and regardless of the damage it will inflict.

President’s Budget Cuts Jeopardize Safety and Security

Safety is a critical part of NASA’s culture, especially following the reforms put in place after the Challenger and Columbia space shuttle disasters. However, Committee Democratic staff received troubling whistleblower accounts that “everyone is busy capitulating to the PBR” such that NASA employees now feel discouraged from bringing safety concerns forward, fearing retaliation or losing their positions. One NASA whistleblower warned that “employees are to keep

their heads down,” and described a culture shift where employees are reluctant to make leadership aware of safety and security issues.

NASA whistleblowers told Committee Democratic staff they have “already seen safety impacts” at the agency as a result of this culture shift. In one example, staffing cuts were so severe that only two employees were left monitoring a physically dangerous project 24/7. Due to the cuts, there was also an extremely limited number of qualified individuals who could step in to fill gaps. This nearly led a NASA whistleblower to take the highly unusual step of declaring a safety stop and shutting down the test before its conclusion due to the increased risk of significant injury and hardware damage.

“...we’re going to see an astronaut death within a few years.”

- NASA whistleblower

Another NASA whistleblower warned they were “very concerned that we’re going to see an astronaut death within a few years” because of the Administration’s “chainsaw approach” to the agency. Reiterating similar concerns, a different NASA whistleblower told Committee Democratic staff there was “no efficiency

and no strategy” in the budget cuts, stating: “It’s a dart board in a dark room where darts are being thrown at random and hitting people.”

In addition to whistleblower reports on the broader culture shift away from proactive safety reporting, Committee Democratic staff received reports indicating that NASA’s Ombuds Program—which was established 20 years ago as an independent, confidential, and neutral communication channel to resolve safety and performance issues without fear of retaliation—has been muzzled by political leadership.¹⁶

According to a NASA whistleblower, the current state of the Ombuds Program “is preventing people from filtering concerns upward.” The whistleblower explained: “We’re expected not to bring safety concerns forward and to not use good judgment. I see safety issues around us all the time.”

These alarming reports mirrored concerns raised by 287 current and former NASA employees in the Voyager Declaration, a formal dissent letter issued in July 2025 warning the Administration’s current policies at NASA “compromise human safety, weaken national security, and undermine the core NASA mission.”¹⁷

“We’re expected not to bring safety concerns forward and to not use good judgement.”

- NASA whistleblower

The letter emphasized that the “culture of organizational silence” now imposed at NASA “represents a dangerous turn away from the lessons learned following the Columbia disaster,” such as Technical Authority, the critical system of checks and balanced established in the aftermath.¹⁸

President’s Budget Cuts Will Kneecap the U.S. Innovation Economy

NASA is a powerful engine fueling America’s innovation economy. Maintaining robust funding for NASA’s science research capabilities is crucial to sustaining the United States’s ability to outcompete globally, as breakthroughs in aerospace and aviation have historically driven technologies that spill over into countless other sectors. From weather forecasting to GPS and medical technology, NASA’s research has spurred economic growth, driven innovation, and elevated American leadership. As Ranking Member Cantwell has highlighted:

“ **NASA is the engine of our nation’s aerospace economy, with Washington state’s 1,500 aerospace companies alone generating \$4.6 billion in economic output.**

– Ranking Member Maria Cantwell

”

The Trump Administration’s pursuit of sweeping cuts in science, research, and technology across the federal government, including at NASA, poses significant economic consequences for the U.S. innovation economy. Compared to the Senate’s bipartisan Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill, the President’s proposed budget would directly lead to at least:¹⁹

\$46.4 billion less in U.S. GDP

866 fewer STEM PhD graduates in the U.S.

10,704 fewer U.S. researchers

The \$46.4 billion in lost economic output over the next ten years far exceeds the \$33 billion in spending cuts to non-defense research and development (R&D) funding that the Trump Administration is seeking across the federal government.²⁰

Beyond the immediate drag on U.S. GDP, the President’s proposed budget is projected to result in 866 fewer STEM PhD’s in the United States over the next ten years—a consequential loss of expertise the United States relies on to lead some of our most important institutions and drive scientific breakthroughs in generative AI, quantum computing, mRNA technology, and other critical sectors. Losing this highly skilled talent would have devastating long-term ramifications on the U.S. innovation pipeline and America’s standing as a global scientific leader.

Compounding that damage, the projected loss of more than 10,700 researchers over the next five years would cause the United States to cede critical ground to its competitors when it can least afford it. Loss of these high-impact researchers would constitute a major setback for U.S. R&D capacity and our ability to win the race on AI and other transformative frontier technologies.

Notably, the above projections reflect only direct impacts on the innovation economy and do not factor in any downstream or indirect economic losses to private sector competitiveness, worker productivity and public health, or entrepreneurial investment.

***Specific to NASA,** agency whistleblowers who spoke to Committee Democratic staff warned that constraints from the President’s proposed budget are already impacting its talent pipeline. According to one whistleblower, the President’s proposed budget is “disproportionately impacting early career members” because NASA is already ending internship programs and zeroing out student programs intended to train the future generation of NASA scientists and engineers. The whistleblower warned that NASA is “**losing our future workforce,**” which is “**really heartbreaking to see the future of NASA, just disappearing.**”*

Congress Must Reassert its Constitutional Power of the Purse—Before It’s Too Late

***For more than 60 years,** Congress and the executive branch have partnered to advance NASA’s pursuit of human knowledge and support its world-class scientists and engineers. These investments have yielded increased economic output, more jobs, new industries, enhanced safety, and a deeper understanding of our planet and the cosmos.*

Like other premier science agencies, NASA has thrived on consistent, bipartisan investments, which are essential to America’s economic prosperity and technological supremacy. But today, NASA faces an existential threat under the Trump Administration.

Ultimately, NASA whistleblowers who spoke with Committee Democratic staff repeatedly emphasized they simply want to focus on executing NASA’s missions—and they simply want the Administration to follow the law as Congress intended. As one whistleblower put it, “I want our leaders to follow NASA’s authorization laws.” Another whistleblower warned: “planning to a budget that hasn’t been approved yet could end up being the destruction of NASA’s mission.”

We cannot allow this to happen. Senate Democrats have a legislative proposal that would specifically prohibit the Administration from unilaterally implementing the President’s FY26

budget proposal under a continuing resolution—the very plan the Administration began pursuing at NASA this summer. And it would specifically bar the Administration from gutting NASA’s Science Mission Directorate as called for in the President’s proposed budget.²¹ Unfortunately, Senate Republicans rejected this proposal and have declined to confront this mounting constitutional crisis.

As this report makes clear, it cannot be business as usual in the United States Congress. Congress must take decisive action to reject the Trump Administration’s reckless budget proposal, its threats to safety and the U.S. innovation economy, and its illegal incursions into Congress’s constitutional authority to control the power of the purse—before it’s too late.

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- ¹ See, e.g., OMB’s “Passback” budgetary proposal for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) directed the agency to “act now to align existing resources and activities to the direction in the Passback,” which called for eliminating NOAA’s Oceanic and Atmospheric Research office; <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25898182-noaa-passback/?q=act+now&mode=document#document/p1>.
- ² Press Release, “The White House Office of Management and Budget Releases the President’s Fiscal Year 2026 Skinny Budget”, *The White House*, (May 2, 2025); <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/05/the-white-house-office-of-management-and-budget-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2026-skinny-budget/>.
- ³ Public Law 119-21, *To provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14*.
- ⁴ See Cai, Sophia, “White House to Agencies: Prepare Mass Firing Plans for a Potential Shutdown,” *Politico*, (Sept. 24, 2025); https://www.politico.com/news/2025/09/24/white-house-firings-shutdown-00579909?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR7NmVOExunStYiTu-0UDqE5Uoz53dbeZL_X0z0phITepNYR7veT4A-be1cPIQ_aem_iRowi8d0ikBu3kdxrONIXg.
- ⁵ See, e.g., Fiorentino, Dominick, and Taylor Riccard, “The Executive Budget Process: An Overview”, *Congressional Research Service*, (May 22, 2025); https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R47019/R47019.9.pdf; (“The Constitution vests Congress with the power of the purse, with several provisions referring to congressional authority to levy taxes, authorize the issuance of debt, and make appropriations to fund the federal government. ...The President’s budget is a set of recommendations, which Congress is not required to adopt”).
- ⁶ See “Impoundment: Unlawful Stealing of Funds Promised to Americans”, *U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Democrats*; <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/impoundment-unlawful-stealing-funds-promised-americans>.
- ⁷ Circular No. A-11, “Preparation, Submission, and Execution of the Budget”, *Executive Office of the President, Office of Management and Budget*, (August 2025); <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/a11.pdf>; (pg. 369).
- ⁸ Vought, Russ, “OMB Director: How President Trump is Deconstructing the Administrative State”, *The Daily Signal*, (Sept. 3, 2025); <https://www.dailysignal.com/2025/09/03/omb-director-vought-deconstructing-the-administrative-state/>.
- ⁹ Mr. Hughes made a similar statement during a June 25, 2025, event. See https://nasawatch.com/personnel-news/audio-from-todays-nasa-town-hall/?utm_source=chatgpt.com; (Mr. Hughes: “If we were to wait for all of the Congressional process to unfold and get to final resolution to make any movements or do anything, it would probably be considered irresponsible.”).
- ¹⁰ Email to NASA Employees from NASA Center Director, (Jun. 12, 2025).
- ¹¹ NASA Update from NASA Acting Administrator, (Jun. 20, 2025); see also Press Release, “The White House Office of Management and Budget Releases the President’s Fiscal Year 2026 Skinny Budget”, *The White House*, (May 2, 2025); <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/05/the-white-house-office-of-management-and-budget-releases-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2026-skinny-budget/>.
- ¹² NASA Update from NASA Acting Administrator, (Jun. 27, 2025).
- ¹³ Cowing, Keith, “Insight Into NASA’s Contractor RIF Plans”, *NASA Watch*, (Aug. 12, 2025); <https://nasawatch.com/personnel-news/insight-into-nasas-contractor-rif-plans/>.
- ¹⁴ 5 USC 2302(b)(8)(A); see also 29 U.S.C. § 660(c); see also 5 U.S.C. § 2302.
- ¹⁵ Email to NASA Employees from NASA Division Chief, (Jul. 1, 2025).
- ¹⁶ “What is the Ombuds Office?”, *National Aeronautics and Space Administration*; <https://www.nasa.gov/ombuds-office/>.
- ¹⁷ Letter, *The Voyager Declaration*, (2025); <https://www.standupforscience.net/nasa-voyager-declaration>.
- ¹⁸ *Id.*
- ¹⁹ Committee Democratic staff generated a model that projects a peak decrease of \$46.4 billion in GDP over 10 years, 866 STEM PhD recipients over 10 years, and 10,704 researchers over 5 years. Specifically, this analysis follows the methodology in: Fieldhouse, Andrew, and Karel Mertens, “The Social Returns to Public R&D”, *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper 33780, (May 2025); <https://doi.org/10.3386/w33780>. Calculations for GDP, STEM PhD, and researchers are based on the estimates from: Fieldhouse, Andrew J., and Karel Mertens, “The Returns to

Government R&D: Evidence from U.S. Appropriations Shocks”, *Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas*, Working Paper 2305, (Nov. 17, 2024); <https://doi.org/10.24149/wp2305r2>.

²⁰ Zimmerman, Alessandra, “FY 2026 R&D Appropriations Senate Activity Summary”, *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, (Aug. 5, 2025); https://www.aaas.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/Senate%20Report%202026_2.pdf.

²¹ Press Release, “DeLauro, Murray Introduce Bill to Prevent a Republican Shutdown”, *U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Democrats*, (Sept. 17, 2025); <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/delauro-murray-introduce-bill-prevent-republican-shutdown>; see also Section-by-Section Summary, “Continuing Appropriations and Extensions and Other Matters Act, 2026”, *U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee Democrats*, (Sept. 17, 2025); <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-appropriations.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/fy26-democratic-continuing-resolution-section-by-section.pdf>; (see Sec. 111, Sec. 123).

APPENDIX

From: [REDACTED]@mail.nasa.gov>
Sent: Thursday, June 12, 2025 4:10 PM
To: [REDACTED]@mail.nasa.gov>
Subject: Message and Updates from the Center Director

A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTER DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues:

I'm happy to share that [REDACTED] director of the Goddard Institute for Space Studies, has been awarded the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation's 2025 Planetary Health Award in recognition of [REDACTED] work on climate change and its impacts. The foundation's board of directors recommended [REDACTED] for this high honor, and Prince Albert II himself made the final selection. GISS has been a leader in understanding planetary atmospheres and systems – especially those of our home planet – and its work remains critical. Please join me in congratulating [REDACTED] on this high honor and for [REDACTED] ongoing leadership in the field of climate change.

As Acting Administrator Janet Petro mentioned in her weekly message last week, NASA is working to begin pivoting the agency to its new priorities. To help align the workforce and resources to the administration's priorities, NASA is offering voluntary separation programs to civil servants. We are now several days into the open window for the [Deferred Resignation Program \(DRP\)](#), [Voluntary Early Retirement Authority \(VERA\)](#), and [Voluntary Separation Incentive Program \(VSIP\)](#). The window for all three will close at 11:59 p.m. ET on Friday, July 25.

The decision to apply for any of these is deeply personal, and one that you should discuss among your families, friends, and colleagues while assessing how you fit within the administration's [budget priorities](#).

The president's budget request also has us reviewing institutional changes, some of which we are implementing immediately. Some measures will be seamless to the workforce, while others will be more noticeable. For example, our contract for the Veo scooter service will end Monday, June 16. Soon after the contract expires, the scooters will be removed. We will explore possible transportation alternatives and will keep you posted on that and other institutional changes.



From: Acting Administrator Janet Petro
Sent: Friday, June 20, 2025 1:46 PM
Subject: NASA Update – June 20, 2025

A Message From **Acting Administrator Janet Petro**



NASA Update – June 20, 2025

As we move through summer, I know many of you are balancing mission demands, upcoming transitions, and well-earned time off. I want to thank you for everything you're doing to keep us steady – whether you're supporting a mission milestone, planning for what's ahead, or helping maintain continuity at your center.

As a reminder, we have an agencywide town hall scheduled for 1 p.m. EDT on Wednesday, June 25. You should have received a calendar invite, and [here's the link to submit questions online](#). [REDACTED], and I know this is a challenging time, and we're committed to having an open and honest conversation.

Ahead of that, I want to acknowledge the very real challenges many organizations are facing as we work through the potential for a more focused budget. These impacts vary across mission directorates, centers, and support offices, but no part of the agency is untouched. Some have asked why we're acting now, or whether we should wait to see how Congress acts. The reality is we must make responsible choices based on the funding we are projected to receive and begin shaping the workforce toward the missions we've been called to do. Using voluntary tools like the Deferred Resignation Program, Voluntary Early Retirement Authority, and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment now gives us the best chance to prepare for the next Fiscal Year without resorting to other more disruptive actions. These are NASA's decisions, made in service of our mission, and our people.



Still, a lot continues to happen across the agency:

- More than 260 stakeholders from government, industry, and academia joined our [Advanced Modeling & Simulation Seminar](#) to learn about the Launch, Ascent, and Vehicle Aerodynamics (LAVA) framework as the team gears up for its public release this fall. The framework is a computational fluid dynamics software system that can accurately simulate challenging problems central to our mission, from aircraft performance evaluation to launch environment characterization.
- I [signed a new agreement](#) this week at the Paris Air Show with our longtime partners at the German Aerospace Center – DLR – that will extend our collaboration in space medicine research. As part of this effort, DLR will provide radiation sensors to fly aboard Orion during Artemis II, helping us better understand the health risks of deep space exploration.
- This week, Expedition 73 aboard space station centered efforts on [exercise research, spacesuit readiness, and science operations](#) – including studying fluid behavior in microgravity using containerless liquid systems – while NASA teams on the ground continue to review the recent repair to the Zvezda module’s aft segment.
- Our TRACERS mission has reached an important milestone this week. The twin spacecraft – designed to study how solar wind interacts with Earth’s magnetosphere – [arrived at Vandenberg Space Force Base](#). They will soon be integrated with a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket ahead of a planned July launch.
- On June 13, years of space technology investments to expand commercial launch capabilities culminated in the successful [maiden flight](#) of UP Aerospace’s Spyder hypersonic rocket. The new launch system offers a low-cost vehicle to enable enhanced suborbital missions and planetary re-entry test environments.

Finally, I’d like to congratulate [REDACTED] at Goddard and [REDACTED] at Marshall on being named 2025 Service to America Medal honorees – better known as the Sammies. [REDACTED] led the OSIRIS-REx mission, which successfully returned samples from asteroid Bennu and is helping us better understand the origins of our solar system. [REDACTED], as chief engineer for SLS (Space Launch System) rocket, played a key role in the Artemis I mission and is helping us prepare for Artemis II. These awards recognize the highest levels of public service, and [REDACTED] work reflects the dedication and excellence that define our NASA team.

Embrace the Challenge,

Janet

A Message From

Acting Administrator Janet Petro



NASA Update – June 27, 2025

Thank you to everyone who tuned in for this week's agency town hall. More than 32,000 of you watched through [REDACTED] – and that doesn't include those who gathered in auditoriums and conference rooms to watch together. A big thanks to our Office of the Chief Information Officer for putting key measures in place to ensure we stayed online and uninterrupted from start to finish.

We covered a lot of ground and tackled some tough topics. I want to reiterate a few key points here:

- Reorganizations are a process – and will take time. I expect to decide on the top-level structure and begin engaging our stakeholders in the coming weeks. That structure will only go down to the center level initially. What happens below that will take shape over time, and I ask for your patience as this reshaping effort takes place – it will take time before we know how this impacts individuals. We are reorganizing to become the most efficient and effective organization we can be – aligned to the mission we are charged with and the resources we expect to receive.
- We are offering a limited window of voluntary workforce shaping tools to avoid any involuntary separations. For civil servants, the opt-in period for the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP), Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) is open through July 25. We do not plan to offer these programs again. With our budget trending downward and reorganization ahead, these voluntary options offer an off-ramp for those who want to take it.
- The President's FY 2026 Budget Request for NASA is NASA's budget request – and while it's still working through Congress, we have to begin preparing to align our workforce and resources now to meet the mission priorities it outlines.

I know many of you are facing deeply personal decisions in the weeks ahead – and I understand how heavy that can feel. Those feelings are valid. It's also understandable to want more clarity. The information that's available now – whether it's the [proposed budget](#) or the [resources](#) through the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer – is the information we have. Sometimes, we're asked to make decisions without the full data set, and I encourage you to lean on your support system, talk things through, and make the best choice for you.

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@nasa.gov>

Date: Tuesday, July 1, 2025 at 11:16 AM

To: [redacted] <[redacted]@mail.nasa.gov>, [redacted]

[redacted] <[redacted]@mail.nasa.gov>

[redacted] <[redacted]@mail.nasa.gov>

Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@nasa.gov>, [redacted]

[redacted] <[redacted]@nasa.gov>

[redacted] <[redacted]@nasa.gov>

Subject: [Inform]: Business Operations & Division Notes

Leadership Round Table:

- Senior leadership of Center meeting with Janet Petro to drive AFNW to zero. Estimate is 534 FTE in FY26, there is no help coming. Agency and Center Town Halls have expressed they will do everything they can to avoid an involuntary RIF of Civil Servants. This is the first step toward achieving that goal.
 - PBR is the direction. Discretionary funds can be impounded per the Impoundment Act of 1974. If there is a CR, impoundment is likely going to get on the table as a mechanism to get to the PBR.
 - If a skill-match is identified less than 90%, supervisors are required to write technical/schedule risk as part of informing the project of the candidate selection.
 - Once a match is identified, the [redacted] should reach out to the contractor team to begin the knowledge transfer and transition process. They will coordinate the transition timeline and logistics and will provide the project with the details of the transition plan once it's established.
- [redacted] announcement coming this afternoon; will be a [redacted] Note this is completely separate from [redacted]
- [redacted] Supervisor's Town Hall next week Wed 9-11am
- [redacted] has 14 reorganizational packages awaiting approval. Met with [redacted] Director HR and discussed transformations.

Division Notes:

- [redacted] or 550/560 will be [redacted] effective July 7th.

