15 JANUARY 2026

Congress Passes Fiscal Year 2026 Spending Bills for NSF, NASA, and DOE

Roohi Dalal
American Astronomical Society (AAS)

Take action today! Congress has largely rejected the severe cuts to science proposed in the President's Budget Request. Take a few minutes today to thank your members of Congress for their support of the sciences, and urge them to continue to provide robust and sustained support in the future: **https://aas.org/action-alert-thank-you-fy2026**

On 15 January 2026, the US Senate passed a "minibus" of Fiscal Year 2026 spending bills, following its passage by the House of Representatives on 8 January. This minibus includes the Commerce, Justice, and Science (CJS) bill (which funds NASA, NSF, NIST, and NOAA, among other agencies), the Energy and Water Development bill (which funds agencies including the Department of Energy), and Interior and Environment bill (which funds the EPA and other agencies). In this blog post, we break down the provisions of this bill that are relevant to the astronomical sciences, covering NSF, NASA, NIST, and the DOE Office of Science. Note that as of 15 January 2026, the bills have been sent to the President to sign into law, but we are awaiting that final signature.

In addition to the details below, you can read the bills at the links below:

Bill Text

Joint Explanatory Statement which contains additional details about spending levels and policy guidance for **Commerce, Justice, and Science** and for **Energy and Water Development**

Bill Summaries for **Commerce, Justice, and Science** and **Energy and Water Development**

Summary Table (note that in some cases we do not have information about FY2025 operating levels, in which case we compare to FY2024):

January 16, 2026 at 10:30 am: The Astrophysics and Planetary Science rows in the table below were mistakenly flipped. The table has been updated.

	FY25	FY26 Budget Request	FY26 Enacted	% change
National Science Foundation	**$9.06B**	**$3.9B**	**$8.75B**	**-3.4%**
Research and Related Activities	$7.2B	$3.3B	$72B	0%
Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction	$234M	$251M	$251M	+7.3%
STEM Education	$1.2B	$288M	$938M	-20%
NASA Science Mission Directorate	**$7.33B**	**$3.91B**	**$7.25B**	**-1.1%**
Astrophysics	$1.5B (FY24)	$523M	$1.6B	+4.2%
Planetary Science	$3.1B (FY24)	$1.9B	$2.5B	-18%
Heliophysics	$710M (FY24)	$433M	$875M	+23%
DOE Office of Science	**$8.24B**	**$7.09B**	**$8.40B**	**+1.9%**
High Energy Physics	$1.25B	$1.11B	$1.24B	-1.3%
National Institute of Standards and Technology	**$1.16B**	**$833M**	**$1.18B**	**+2.3%**
Scientific and Technical Research and Services	$857M	$709M	$844M	-1.5%

Table of Contents:

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) Bill

The Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) bill provides funding for the Department of Commerce, the Department of Justice, and science agencies, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). We detail the provisions for NSF, NASA, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) below, but there are some general provisions in the joint explanatory statement accompanying the bill that will be important for our science agencies:

> The provisions included in both previously released **House** and **Senate** CJS reports, unless noted otherwise, contain the same weight as language in this new explanatory statement, i.e., the previous language from the House and the Senate remains valid and should be complied with. You can read our summary of the **House** and **Senate** reports for more details.
>
> Agencies and departments are generally **not permitted to reallocate or reprogram funds** appropriated by this bill. "*Each department and agency funded in this act shall follow the directions set forth in this act and the accompanying explanatory statement and shall not reallocate resources or reorganize activities except as provided herein.*" Moreover, the explanatory statement notes, "*Any program, project, or activity cited in this explanatory statement, the House report, or the Senate report and not changed by this act, shall be construed as the position of the Congress and shall not be subject to reductions or reprogramming without prior approval of the Committees.*"

Any **Reductions in Force** (RIFs) at agencies covered under this bill require at least a 45-day prior notification to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees.

The bill requires that the Department of Commerce, NASA, and NSF continue to apply negotiated **indirect cost rates**. The statement acknowledges that there is room for improvement in the system used to identify and recover indirect cost rates and notes that the proposed Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) model merits further consideration.

National Science Foundation

The bill provides **$8.75 billion for the National Science Foundation**, which is a 3.4% cut from Fiscal Year 2024, but far less than the 57% cut proposed in the President's Budget Request.

Research and Related Activities

The bills funds the Research and Related Activities (R&RA) account at the level of **$7.2 billion** and directs NSF to "*equitably distribute funding to support all basic research directorates within R&RA, as well as the Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships Directorate.*" It further states that "*no directorate shall receive more than a 5 percent reduction relative to the fiscal year 2024 enacted level.*"

This includes **$30 million** for NSF to support the **development of next generation astronomy facilities** recommended in the most recent Astronomy and Astrophysics Decadal Survey (Astro2020). It directs NSF to immediately advance **both US Extremely Large Telescopes** into final design review, at no cost to the Federal Government, with a briefing to the appropriations committees on how NSF intends to implement this direction expected within 45 days. The bill also provides no less than **$49 million for the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO)**.

The joint explanatory statement notes support for the "*world-class research performed at the National Science Foundation-funded research and development centers and major scientific facilities.*" It directs NSF to provide a briefing within 30 days on its facilities management and oversight plan for NSF-supported research and development centers and major scientific facilities across all disciplines, and to submit a report within 180 days on this plan.

Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (MREFC)

The bill provides **$251 million** for the MREFC account to support Antarctic Infrastructure Recapitalization, the Leadership-Class Computing Facility, and Mid-scale Research Infrastructure.

STEM Education

The bill provides **$938 million** for the STEM Education Directorate at NSF, rejecting the administration's proposal to dissolve the directorate. This includes **$285 million for the Graduate Research Fellowship Program** (GRFP), as well as clear funding levels for a number of other programs within STEM EDU. As noted earlier, the language in the earlier House and Senate reports remains valid, including Senate language about the importance of Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) programs, and the value of programs to broaden participation in STEM.

NASA

The bill funds NASA at **$24.4 billion**, a 1.6% cut from FY2025. This includes **$7.25 billion for the Science Mission Directorate** (a 1.1% cut compared to the 47% cut proposed in the President's Budget Request), and **$143 million for the Office of STEM Engagement**, rejecting the administration's proposal to close this office, which funds the NASA Space Grant among other programs.

Additionally, the explanatory statement expresses concern over the facility and building closures at **NASA Goddard Space Flight Center**'s Greenbelt campus, and it directs NASA to "*preserve all the technical and scientific world-class capabilities at Goddard, including those that will be used to complete any mission funded in fiscal year 2026 by Congress during any campus consolidation.*" It also directs NASA to contract a study with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine within 30 days regarding "*the current technical and scientific capabilities housed at Goddard, what capabilities are positioned to ensure long-term success of the NASA mission, including for future cutting-edge scientific discovery and crewed space exploration, and what facilities are needed to house and operate those capabilities.*" The explanatory statement also states that "*NASA shall ensure that **Goddard Institute for Space Studies** (GISS) employees are able to continue work with minimal disruption, including by considering a physical location of GISS near its previous location that supports GISS's strong academic partnerships.*"

Astrophysics

The bill provides **$1.6 billion for Astrophysics**. This includes:

$49.3 million for Balloon Projects

$98.3 million for the Hubble Space Telescope

$208 million for the James Webb Space Telescope

$80.5 million for the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA)

$300 million for the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope

$150 million for the Habitable Worlds Observatory

Added on January 16, 2026 at 1:10 pm: As noted earlier, the language of the House and Senate reports carries the same weight as the joint explanatory statement accompanying this bill. These reports provide funding levels for other missions, such as $63 million for the **Chandra X-ray Observatory**.

Planetary Science

The bill provides **$2.5 billion for Planetary Science**. The explanatory statement states that the bill does not support the existing **Mars Sample Return** (MSR) program. However, it notes that "*the technological capabilities being developed in the MSR program are not only critical to the success of future science missions but also to human exploration of the Moon and Mars.*" It therefore provides **$110 million for the Mars Future Missions** program, including existing MSR efforts, "*to support radar, spectroscopy, entry, descent, and landing systems, and translational precursor technologies that will enable science missions for the next decade, including lunar and Mars missions.*" In addition to the Mars Future Missions program, the bill also provides:

$300 million for NEO Surveyor

$99 million for DAVINCI

$500 million for Dragonfly

$10 million for New Horizons

$100 million for formulation of the Uranus Orbiter and Probe mission.

Heliophysics

The bill funds **Heliophysics at $875 million**. This includes:

$25 million for the Parker Solar Probe

$100 million for the Geospace Dynamics Constellation

$109.5 million for HelioSwarm

No less than $23 million from within current and prior year resources to continue to the Magnetospheric Multiscale (MMS) mission.

National Institute of Standards and Technology

The bill funds NIST at **$1.8 billion dollars**, including **$1.25 billion for the Scientific and Technical Research Services** (STRS) account, which houses the Atomic Spectroscopy group, among other critical science-enabling work.

Energy and Water Development Bill

The Energy and Water Development Bill provides **$8.4 billion for the Department of Energy Office of Science**, including **$1.2 billion for High Energy Physics** (which includes **$861 million for High Energy Physics Research**), where Cosmic Frontier programs are housed. The bill also provides no less than **$15 million for the Computational Sciences Graduate Fellowship**. The bill and explanatory statement include similar language as CJS about continuing to apply negotiated **indirect cost rates** and the FAIR model meriting further consideration.

RELATED POSTS

House FY2026 Appropriations Report: NASA, NSF, and DOE Details

30 Jul 2025

The House released its Commerce, Justice, and Science spending bills and reports for FY2026. Here we break down the provisions related to the astronomical sciences for NASA, the National Science Foundation, and the...

Senate FY2026 CJS Appropriations Report: NASA and NSF Details

22 Jul 2025

The Senate released its Commerce, Justice, and Science spending bill and report for FY2026. Here we break down the provisions related to the astronomical sciences for NASA and the National Science Foundation.

The FY26 President's Budget Request: NASA and NSF Details

5 Jun 2025

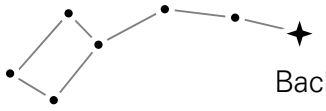
Detailed budget requests for NASA and NSF were released on 30 May 2025. We break down the impacts to astrophysics, heliophysics, and planetary science programs and discuss how you can take action and urge Congress to...

Want to submit content for the AAS website and biweekly Digest? Read our Posting Guidelines and then click the button below:

Submit Content

Contact the Communications Department if you have any questions.

Privacy Policy Terms of Use



Back to top