



THE PLANETARY SOCIETY

85 South Grand Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91105-1602 USA
phone: 626-793-5100
fax: 626-793-5528
e-mail: tps@planetary.org
<http://planetary.org>

CO-FOUNDER
CARL SAGAN
1934 - 1996

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairman of the Board
DAN GERACI
CEO, IronAge Consulting Corp.

President
JAMES BELL
*Professor, School of
Earth and Space Exploration
Arizona State University*

Vice-President
HEIDI HAMMEL
*Executive Vice President,
AURA*

Executive Director
BILL NYE

ANN DRUYAN
*Chief Executive Officer,
Cosmos Studios*

LOUIS D. FRIEDMAN
Co-Founder

SCOTT HUBBARD
Professor, Stanford University

WESLEY T. HUNTRESS, JR.
*Director Emeritus, Geophysical Laboratory,
Carnegie Institution of Washington*

LON LEVIN
SkySeven Ventures

ALEXIS LIVANOS
*Corporate Vice President
and Chief Technology Officer,
Northrop Grumman*

JOHN LOGSDON
*Professor Emeritus, Space Policy Institute,
The George Washington University*

BRUCE MURRAY
Co-Founder

BIJAL BEE THAKORE
*Regional Coordinator for Asia Pacific
and Space Generation Advisory Council*

NEIL deGRASSE TYSON
*Director, Hayden Planetarium,
American Museum of Natural History*

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL

ROGER-MAURICE BONNET
*Executive Director,
International Space Science Institute*

YASUNORI MATOGAWA
*Associate Executive Director,
Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency*

MAMORU MOHRI
*Director, National Museum of Emerging
Science and Innovation*

RISTO PELLINEN
*Director of Science in Space Research,
Finnish Meteorological Institute*

Affiliations are for identification purposes only.

January 12, 2012

The Honorable Jacob Lew
Director
Office of Management and Budget
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Lew:

We are writing to you to request your support for NASA's Science programs as you finalize the Fiscal Year 2013 budget request. We recommend a small but significant change to NASA's budget portfolio.

We recognize the intense fiscal and budget pressure the country faces. We understand that agency programs will receive unprecedented scrutiny and that top line discretionary budgets are highly uncertain and likely to shrink. Such a budget environment demands prioritization, optimization, and re-balancing to maximize agency effectiveness.

NASA is an investment in our nation's future, and science is the best place to invest in NASA.

A healthy, robust NASA Science program, along with its attendant innovative technologies, will energize, engage, and inspire the next generation of scientists, engineers, educators, and the public. The diversity and frequency of science missions recommended by the various National Research Council decadal surveys will, if funded, significantly contribute to thousands of high-tech jobs in the aerospace industry, at research laboratories, and in universities, and will help strengthen the U.S. aerospace industrial base. These programs will stimulate the best and brightest with interesting and meaningful scientific and technical challenges that will make our nation stronger and more competitive. NASA's Science program is rich with exciting potential missions, destinations, and science, but its reach is limited by financial resources.

We acknowledge that cost containment is critical in formulating NASA's science programs. Our recommendation takes into account the descoping of missions to fit current budget constraints and rigorous reviews from external organizations.

For the last several years, the share of NASA's budget dedicated to science has hovered between 24 and 28 percent. For comparison, human spaceflight programs account for 45 percent. If NASA's overall budget shrinks, we are concerned that the Science program will carry a disproportionate burden of any reduction, scaling back of some of NASA's most productive and important programs, resulting in the potential loss of America's leadership in the global space science enterprise.

Thus, a modest rebalancing of a few percent is warranted based on the merits: the quality of science, the need for innovation, the readiness of the programs to proceed, and the value to the nation—value that has repeatedly and consistently been demonstrated over many decades. Such a rebalancing will significantly help implement the science community's highest priorities in the decadal surveys and continue a productive program of missions in Astrophysics, Earth Science, Heliophysics, and Planetary Science.

We arrive at this conclusion primarily because NASA's Science program currently has an abundance of compelling world-class science missions with clearly defined mission goals and carefully crafted program plans that are poised to proceed. Increasing the share of the NASA budget for Science is the best place for the agency to make the most effective use of the taxpayers' money in today's austere budget environment.

We strongly urge the Administration to rebalance NASA's portfolio and re-baseline the funding for the programs in the Science Mission Directorate—Astrophysics, Earth Science, Heliophysics, and Planetary Science. A small increase to 30% of NASA's overall budget would support the outstanding missions being completed and planned.

We deeply appreciate your serious consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Nye
Chief Executive Officer
The Planetary Society



Jim Bell
Professor, School of Earth & Space Exploration
Arizona State University

cc: Maj. Gen. Charles F. Bolden, Jr.
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The Honorable John P. Holdren
Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy