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NASA Appropriations and Authorizations: A Fact Sheet

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Overview

Congressional deliberations about the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) often focus on the availability of funding. This fact sheet provides data on past and current NASA appropriations, as well as the President's budget request for FY2021 and congressional action on FY2021 appropriations and authorizations of appropriations.

Table 1 shows appropriations for NASA for FY2015-FY2021. The data for FY2015-FY2019 include supplemental appropriations, rescissions, transfers, and reprogramming. They are taken from NASA's congressional budget justifications for FY2017-FY2021.[1] Congressional budget justifications are available on the NASA budget website (http://www.nasa.gov/news/budget/) for the current year and for past years back to FY2002. The data for FY2020 are as enacted by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-93). For amounts not specified in that act, see the explanatory statement in the *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2019. The data for FY2021 are as enacted by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260). For amounts not specified in that act, see the explanatory statement in the *Congressional Record*, December 21, 2020.

Table 2 shows FY2020 appropriations as enacted; the Trump Administration's request for FY2021; FY2021 appropriations proposed in the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2021 (Division B of H.R. 7617 as passed by the House in July 2020); FY2021 appropriations proposed in the draft bill and explanatory statement released by the Senate Committee on Appropriations in November 2020; FY2021 appropriations enacted in P.L. 116-260; and authorizations of FY2021 appropriations proposed in the NASA Authorization Act of 2020 (S. 2800) as passed by the Senate.

Note that the Trump Administration budget requests for FY2019-FY2021 proposed new names for some NASA accounts. In the enacted FY2019 appropriation, Education became Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Engagement. The Administration also proposed renaming Space Technology as Exploration Technology; Exploration as Deep Space Exploration Systems; and Space Operations as Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and Spaceflight Operations. The Administration's proposals would also have transferred certain activities from Exploration to Space Technology, so the amounts shown for those items in **Table 2** may represent somewhat different content in different columns.

Figure 1 shows NASA's total annual budget authority from the agency's establishment in FY1958 to FY2021, in both current dollars and inflation-adjusted FY2021 dollars.

[1] FY2016, FY2017, and FY2019 Education and STEM Engagement amounts are not shown in the FY2018, FY2019, and FY2021 congressional budget justifications and are instead taken from the explanatory statement for the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113), *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2015, pp. H9741-H9743; the explanatory statement for the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 115-31), *Congressional Record*, May 3, 2017, pp. H3374-H3375; and the explanatory statement for the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-93), *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2019, pp. H10969-H10971.

Table 1. NASA Appropriations, FY2015-FY2021

(budget authority in $ millions)

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Science	**$5,243**	**$5,584**	**$5,762**	**$6,212**	**$6,887**	**$7,139**[a]	**$7,301**
Earth Science	1,784	1,927	1,908	1,921	1,931	1,972	2,000
Planetary Science	1,447	1,628	1,828	2,218	2,747	2,713	2,700
Astrophysics	731	762	783	850	1,191	1,306	1,356
James Webb Space Telescope	645	620	569	534	305	423	415
Heliophysics	636	647	675	689	713	725	751
Biological and Physical Sciences[b]	—	—	—	—	—	—	79
Aeronautics	**642**	**634**	**656**	**685**	**725**	**784**	**829**
Space Technology	**600**	**686**	**687**	**760**	**927**	**1,100**	**1,100**
Exploration	**3,543**	**3,996**	**4,324**	**4,790**	**5,045**	**6,018**	**6,555**
Exploration Systems Development	3,212	3,641	3,929	4,395	4,087	4,583	4,583
Orion	*1,190*	*1,270*	*1,330*	*1,350*	*1,350*	*1,407*	*1,407*
Space Launch System	*1,679*	*1,972*	*2,127*	*2,150*	*2,144*	*2,586*	*2,586*
Exploration Ground Systems	*343*	*399*	*472*	*895*	*593*	*590*	*590*
Exploration R&D	331	355	395	395	958	1,435	1,973
Space Operations	**4,626**	**5,032**	**4,943**	**4,749**	**4,640**	**4,140**	**3,988**
Space Shuttle	8	5	—	—	—	—	—
International Space Station	1,525	1,436	1,451	1,493	1,490	n/s	n/s
Space Transportation	2,254	2,668	2,589	2,346	2,110	n/s	n/s
Space and Flight Support	839	923	903	910	1,000	n/s	n/s
Commercial LEO Development	—	—	—	—	40	15	17
Education / STEM Engagement	**119**	**115**	**100**	**100**	**110**	**120**	**127**
Space Grant	40	40	40	40	44	48	51
EPSCoR	18	18	18	18	21	24	26
MUREP	32	32	32	32	33	36	38
Other	29	25	10	10	12	12	12
Safety, Security, & Mission Svcs.	**2,755**	**2,772**	**2,769**	**2,827**	**2,755**	**2,913**[c]	**2,937**
Construction and EC&R	**446**	**427**	**485**[d]	**657**[e]	**372**	**373**	**390**
Inspector General	**37**	**37**	**38**	**39**	**39**	**42**	**44**
Total	**18,010**	**19,285**	**19,762**[d]	**20,817**[e]	**21,500**	**22,629**[ac]	**23,271**

Sources: FY2015-FY2019 from NASA FY2017-FY2021 congressional budget justifications. FY2020 from P.L. 116-93 and explanatory statement, *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2019, pp. H10969-H10971. FY2021 from P.L. 116-260 and explanatory statement, *Congressional Record*, December 21, 2020, pp. H7944-H7947.

Notes: Some totals may not add because of rounding. R&D = Research and Development. LEO = Low Earth Orbit. STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. EPSCoR = Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. MUREP = Minority University Research and Education Program. EC&R = Environmental Compliance and Remediation. n/s = not specified.

a. Not adjusted to reflect rescission of $70 million from prior year unobligated balances (Section 521(c)).
b. Included in International Space Station before FY2021.
c. Does not include additional $60 million appropriated by the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136).
d. Includes $109 million in additional emergency funding from Section 540 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 115-31) that is not shown in the NASA FY2019 congressional budget justification.
e. Includes $81 million in supplemental emergency funding from the Further Additional Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2018 (Division B of P.L. 115-123) that is not shown in the NASA FY2020 congressional budget justification.

Table 2. NASA Appropriations and Authorizations, FY2021

(budget authority in $ millions)

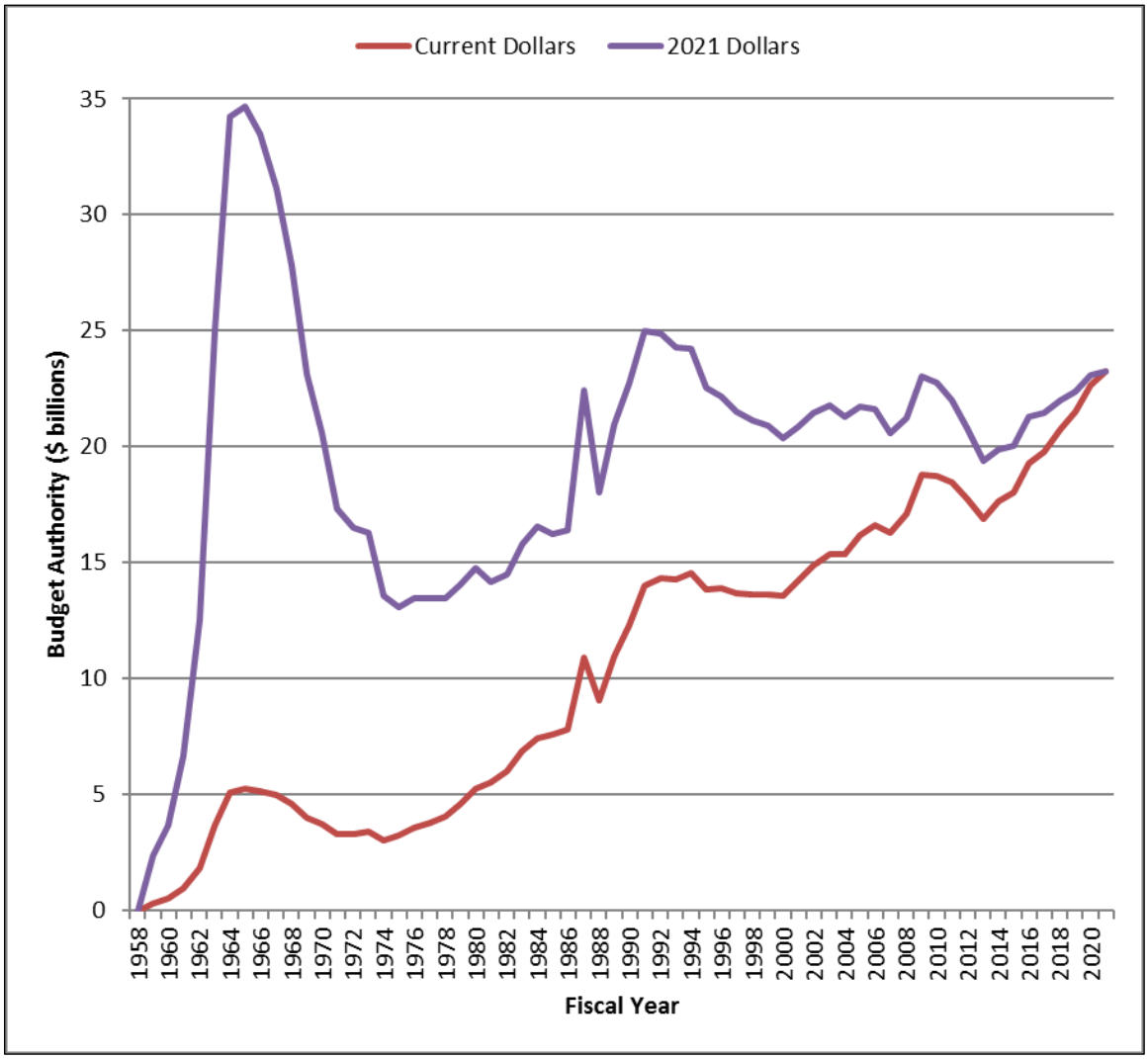
		FY21 Appropriations				FY21 Auth.
	FY2020 Enacted	Request	House	Senate	Enacted	Senate
Science	**$7,139**[a]	**$6,307**	**$7,098**	**$7,275**	**$7,301**	**$7,275**
Earth Science	1,972	1,768	2,022	1,984	2,000	n/s
Planetary Science	2,713	2,660	2,713	2,674	2,700	n/s
Astrophysics	1,306	831	1,306	1,346	1,356	n/s
James Webb Space Telescope	423	415	423	415	415	n/s
Heliophysics	725	633	633	776	751	n/s
Biological and Physical Sciences[b]	—	—	—	79	79	n/s
Aeronautics	**784**	**819**	**819**	**829**	**829**	**829**
Space Tech. / Exploration Tech.	**1,100**	**1,578**	**1,100**	**1,206**	**1,100**	**1,206**
Exploration / Deep Sp. Exp. Sys.	**6,018**	**8,762**	**6,018**	**6,706**	**6,555**	**6,706**
Exploration Systems Development	4,583	4,042	4,460	4,583	4,583	n/s
Orion	*1,407*	*1,401*	*1,401*	*1,407*	*1,407*	*n/s*
Space Launch System	*2,586*	*2,257*	*2,600*	*2,586*	*2,586*	*n/s*
Exploration Ground Systems	*590*	*385*	*460*	*590*	*590*	*n/s*
Exploration R&D	1,435	4,719	1,557	2,124	1,973	n/s
Space Ops. / LEO and Spflt. Ops.	**4,140**	**4,187**	**4,052**	**3,988**	**3,988**	**3,988**
International Space Station	n/s	1,401	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s
Space Transportation	n/s	1,878	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s
Space and Flight Support	n/s	759	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s
Commercial LEO Development	15	150	15	17	17	n/s
STEM Engagement	**120**	**0**	**127**	**120**	**127**	**120**
Space Grant	48	0	51	48	51	n/s
EPSCoR	24	0	26	24	26	n/s
MUREP	36	0	38	36	38	n/s
Other	12	0	12	12	12	n/s
Safety, Security, & Mission Svcs.	**2,913**[c]	**3,010**	**2,953**	**2,937**	**2,937**	**2,937**
Construction and EC&R	**373**	**539**	**419**	**390**	**390**	**390**
Inspector General	**42**	**44**	**44**	**44**	**44**	**44**
Total	**22,629**[ac]	**25,246**	**22,630**	**23,495**	**23,271**	**23,495**

Sources: FY2020: P.L. 116-93 and explanatory statement, *Congressional Record*, December 17, 2019, pp. H10969-H10971. Request: FY2021 NASA congressional budget justification. House: H.R. 7617 as passed by the House (July 2020) and H.Rept. 116-455 (on H.R. 7667). Senate: Senate Appropriations Committee draft (November 2020). Enacted: P.L. 116-260 and explanatory statement, *Congressional Record*, December 21, 2020, pp. H7944-H7947. Senate authorizations: S. 2800 as passed by the Senate (December 2020).

Notes: Some totals may not add because of rounding. R&D = Research and Development. LEO = Low Earth Orbit. EPSCoR = Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research. MUREP = Minority University Research and Education Program. EC&R = Environmental Compliance and Remediation. n/s = not specified. See text for name changes and variations in program content.

a. Not adjusted to reflect rescission of $70 million from prior year unobligated balances (Section 521(c)).
b. Included in International Space Station in FY2021, Request, and House.
c. Does not include additional $60 million appropriated by the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136).

Figure 1. NASA Funding, FY1958-FY2021



Source: Compiled by CRS. FY1958-FY2008 from National Aeronautics and Space Administration, *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President: Fiscal Year 2008 Activities*, http://history.nasa.gov/presrep2008.pdf, Table D-1A. FY2009-FY2014 from NASA congressional budget justifications, FY2011-FY2016. FY2015-FY2021 as in **Table 1**. Current dollars deflated to FY2021 dollars using GDP (chained) price index from President's budget for FY2021, Historical Table 10.1, https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/historical-tables/.

Note: Transition quarter between FY1976 and FY1977 not shown. FY2020 amount does not include additional $60 million appropriated by the CARES Act (P.L. 116-136).

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