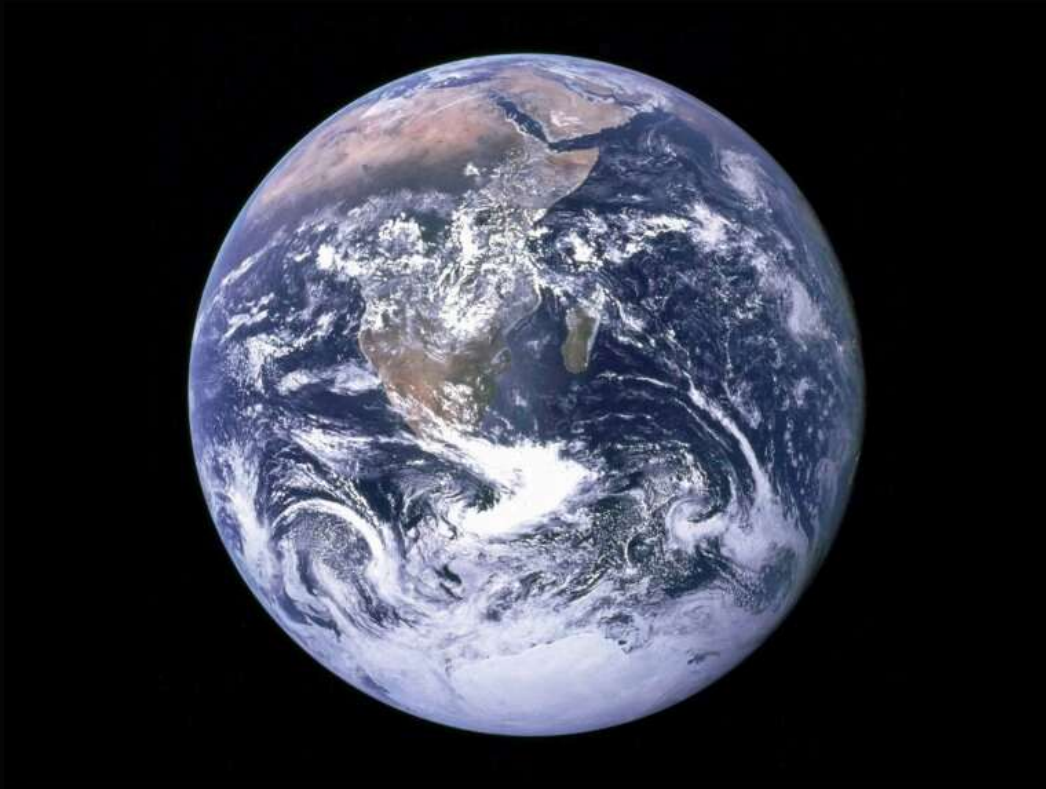


NASA Budget Cuts: Armageddon or a Call-to-Arms?



NASA/Unsplash.com



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Commentary

Over the years, NASA has undergone ups and downs in terms of financial hits and shifts of priority. While the projected White House recommended financial reductions and face-lifting ideas for the civilian space agency are not unique—they are being viewed by many as a budgetary bombshell.

But first a little space history.

In the past, for instance, President Barack Obama's administration made a similar move when it cancelled the NASA Constellation Program, rejecting plans to return to the Moon. In the early 1990's US President George H. W.

Bush's sweeping and long-range Space Exploration Initiative suffered the same fate.

Moon first... Mars first... human treks to an asteroid. America's space exploration agenda has been a flip-flop in space policy. Pre-empted in the process was a stick-to-it strategy.

But that was then. This is now.

Beating China

Among NASA projects cross-haired by the proposed Trump budget is phasing out the government-financed mega-booster, the Space Launch System, retiring it after the "rebooting" of planting humans back on the Moon.

The crew-carrying Orion capsule would also be retired. Done away with is the Gateway lunar space station, considered by NASA as vital to support Artemis human missions to the Moon and help blueprint the first human mission to Mars and beyond.

Aced out in President Trump's financial plan is the NASA-led Mars Sample Return mission, tagged in the White House [budget](#) as "grossly over budget and whose goals would be achieved by human missions to Mars." The budget suggests refocusing NASA funding to assure "beating China back to the Moon and putting the first human on Mars."

Begative Upshots

The budget being offered is one that proposes a 24.3 percent reduction to NASA's top-line funding and slashing the space agency's science budget by 47 percent.

On one hand, NASA's budget is tiny. On the other, the impact from civil space spending is large.

NASA receives only about 0.4 percent of federal discretionary spending. Slashing it would barely influence national finances, but the outcome may well harm America's scientific prowess, advancement of high-tech via spinoff technologies, and well-earned prestige around the world for decades of space achievement.

Moreover, a negative upshot from the recently released budget outline is in training the nation's future science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce. This troublesome trend given NASA space science budget decrease is feared loss of a generation of space scientists.

Integrated and Strategic Approach

All this is prologue to a bottom line worth keeping in mind.

Human exploration, robotic science, technology development, and aeronautics supported by NASA all reinforce each other. More to the point is that weakening one area undermines the whole, especially considering the growing competition with China.

What's urgently needed is an integrated and strategic approach to space exploration.

Is there any good news in all of this?

Yes, in that we're soon to start playing budgetary ping-pong between Congress and the White House. There's a still to-be-determined outcome. Already there's reaction from Congress and a reminder that the "could-be" budget is a step in a lengthy process, not final closure.

Uncharted Territory

Prompted by the outbreak of angst by space researchers worried about NASA future budget, there's also need to remember the quip often tied to Mark Twain, the American writer and humorist, that "the reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

The looming question is whether Congressional lawmakers will decree an emergency call-to-action, a crossing of a red line to push back where needed?

This is all uncharted territory, like space itself.

From [RealClearWire](#)

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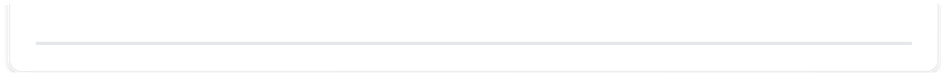
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