ANTISCIENCE GOP 'EVISCERATES' NASA SPENDING ON CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH

Among the critical aspects of NASA's earth science mission: weather prediction, monitoring ice in the Arctic, and tracking wildfires.

Reinforcing the GOP's reputation as anti-science, Republicans in the U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on Thursday voted to slash NASA spending on the branch that studies climate change issues.

According to news reports, the NASA authorization proposal, passed along party lines, would cut between $300-500 million in funding to NASA's Earth Sciences division, which researches the planet's natural systems and processes—including climate change, severe weather, and glaciers. The bill will now go to the full House for a vote.
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science, and go against the overwhelming 97 percent consensus among climate
scientists, what do you expect?"
—Phil Plait, Slate

As Ars Technica notes, "This vote follows the committee's decision to cut the
[National Science Foundation]'s geoscience budget and comes after a prominent
attack on NASA's Earth sciences work during a Senate hearing, all of which
suggests a concerted campaign against the researchers who, among other things,
are telling us that climate change is a reality."

Unsurprisingly, NASA pushed back against this latest attempt to stymie climate
research.

In a statement released Thursday, the space agency's administrator Charles
Bolden said the proposal "guts our Earth science program and threatens to set back
generations worth of progress in better understanding our changing climate, and
our ability to prepare for and respond to earthquakes, droughts, and storm events."

And other scientists added their own criticisms to the mix. In a letter (pdf) to the
committee, the head of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) said that group is
"extremely concerned" about the funding cuts.
"The research performed and supported by the [NASA] division helps us understand the world we live in and provide a basis for knowledge and understanding of natural hazards, weather forecasting, air quality, and water availability, among other concerns," wrote AGU executive director Christine W. McEntee. "The applicability of these missions cannot be overstated given their impact on your constituents."

Astronomer and journalist Phil Plait, writing at Slate, agreed that "the evisceration of Earth sciences means this bill is seriously, critically flawed." But, Plait said, U.S. voters only have themselves to blame for such short-sighted policy decisions:

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We sowed this Congress, and this is what we reap. Potentially huge cuts to critical science, care of the GOP. Remember that in November 2016.

Several Democratic lawmakers have also expressed their opposition to the spending cuts.

In an op-ed published this week at The Hill, U.S. Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Tex.), the House committee's ranking member, wrote:
In addition to other problems in the bill, it cuts earth science funding by more than $320 million. Earth science, of course, includes climate science. Despite the fact that in January NASA announced 2014 was likely the warmest year since 1880, it should come as no surprise that the majority wants to cut funding for climate science. Embarrassingly, just last week, every single Republican member of this committee present voted against the notion that climate change might be caused by people.

Of course, there would be implications beyond a potential dearth of climate research.

In an analysis published Friday at the Washington Post, Dr. Marshall Shepherd, professor of atmospheric sciences and geography at the University of Georgia and 2013 president of the American Meteorological Society, wrote:

As the former deputy project scientist for the Global Precipitation Measurement mission, I assure you that the level of cuts proposed for NASA’s earth sciences program would not only harm but end many programs and jeopardize many federal and private sector jobs. The engineering, ground systems, science, and support work of NASA earth science missions is supported by some of the most vibrant private aerospace and science-technology companies in the world. And they are U.S. companies.
"More importantly," Shepherd continued, "none of us has a 'vacation planet' we can go to for the weekend, so I argue that NASA's mission to study planet Earth should be a 'no-brainer'."

Source: http://www.commondreams.org/news/2015/05/01/anti-science-gop-eviscerates-nasa-spending-climate-change-research