

Congress Pushes Back on Trump's Deep Cuts to Research Funding

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Congress is signaling strong opposition to President Donald Trump's proposed cuts to federal science and research programs for fiscal year 2026. Key budget proposals from both the House of Representatives and the Senate preserve significantly more funding for science agencies than the White House's plan, highlighting bipartisan concern over the future of American innovation and research development.

In May, the Trump administration proposed reducing federal research and development (R&D) spending by nearly 25 percent. The proposal also called for eliminating the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and cutting the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) by more than 80 percent. In contrast, during a July 10 Senate Appropriations Committee meeting, lawmakers suggested cutting just \$16 million from the National Science Foundation (NSF), compared to the White House's requested \$5 billion reduction. Meanwhile, the House version proposed a \$2 billion decrease, less than half the amount sought by the administration.

Alessandra Zimmermann, a federal budget analyst, commended lawmakers for not yielding to drastic cuts, stating that "the story of the future of science is still being written" and that it was encouraging to see strong congressional interest in preserving research investments. The House also rejected a 14 percent reduction to the Department of Energy's Office of Science and maintained NASA's Science Mission Directorate funding at approximately 8 percent below current levels, significantly more generous than the White House's proposal. Similarly, funding for the Fulbright Program was sustained at \$288 million, despite the administration's proposal to cut it by over 50 percent.

Roger Pielke of the American Enterprise Institute noted that congressional resistance to science funding cuts is longstanding. He pointed out that Congress also blocked similar deep cuts to science funding during Trump's first term. Agencies such as the NSF, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and NASA continue to enjoy bipartisan support, even if programs focused on climate science remain politically sensitive.

Despite this congressional pushback, the path forward remains uncertain. Lawmakers must approve all appropriations bills before the September 30 deadline to avoid a government shutdown. While the current budget drafts represent a rejection of the administration's aggressive reductions, science advocates remain cautious, acknowledging that the outcome hinges on fall negotiations.