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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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September 28, 2011

CLERK AND STAFF DIRECTOR
WILLIAM B. INGLEE

TELEPHONE:
(202) 225-2771

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

Dear Director Lew:

As you are no doubt aware, the House Appropriations Committee's reported fiscal year 2012 bill for Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies contains a proposal to eliminate the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) due to significant management and budgetary problems. Since the unveiling of that bill, the Administration and its supporters in the science community have repeatedly expressed opposition to the House's position. Over the past few months, I have been told many times that JWST's scientific potential must be preserved and that the project is no longer just an astrophysics priority, but a NASA-wide priority.

In spite of this high level of apparent concern about JWST's status, however, the Administration has been very slow to provide Congress with the information needed to support continued JWST funding. For example, the rebaselining of JWST's budget and schedule was complete for months before it was shared with the Congress, which denied my Subcommittee the opportunity to assess the replan prior to making a fiscal year 2012 funding recommendation for the program.

With the submission of the baseline, we finally now know that JWST is expected to cost \$8.7 billion. That represents an increase of \$2.2 billion above the amount calculated by an independent review of the program last year, \$3.6 billion above the prior NASA baseline and more than \$7 billion above the amount estimated by the decadal survey that first designated JWST as a priority. We also know that implementing this replan without a budget amendment will require substantial cuts in other NASA programs in fiscal year 2012 and the outyears. This fact has not been lost on heliophysics, Earth science and planetary science researchers, who have already begun mobilizing to prevent their own programs from falling victim to JWST's overruns.

While acknowledging that substantial cuts will be necessary, the Administration has so far failed to identify a single specific proposal to offset the increase in JWST spending above the levels contained in the President's fiscal year 2012 request. Either no offsets have been proposed

because JWST really isn't a top priority, or the Administration is hoping that remaining silent will force Congress to act unilaterally and thereby take sole ownership of the cuts necessitated by the Administration's actions. No matter which explanation is correct, continuing silence is neither fair nor acceptable to the Congress and to members of the scientific community who will be deeply impacted by the ultimate outcome of the JWST debate.

In the coming weeks, the House and Senate will sit down to negotiate final appropriations bills for fiscal year 2012, and the appropriate level of funding for JWST will be one of the most significant issues considered. For us to make a truly informed decision that takes into account both the value of JWST and the value of opportunities that may be precluded by the JWST replan, we must have the offset information. If such information is not provided by the time that conference negotiations begin, I will consider that to be an indication that JWST is no higher in priority than any other existing or planned NASA activity.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Diana Simpson on the Subcommittee staff. She can be reached at 202-225-3351. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science and Related Agencies

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

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

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.