

# Obama's budget would boost science, health (Update)

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This undated NASA handout image shows a full scale James webb Space Telescope. President Barack Obama's budget proposal released on Wednesday would boost funds for major science and health programs while making small cuts at NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The budget proposal that US President Barack Obama released Wednesday would boost funds for major science and health programs

while making cuts at NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The plan stands little chance of being enacted by the divided houses of Congress, which have already passed their own rival budgets, but was hailed by the administration's top scientists as preserving key research goals.

Overall investment in research and development would amount to \$142.8 billion, a \$1.9 billion increase over 2012 but a dip backward when four percent inflation is taken into account.

John Holdren, assistant to the president for science and technology said "it's a small decline and it represents a continuing strong commitment" by the Obama administration to protect research and development.

Holdren also noted that if defense cuts were separated out, remaining research and development would show a five percent climb over 2012.

Top projects at the US space agency would continue, including preparing a new spaceship to send astronauts to the International Space Station, an asteroid rendezvous and the 2018 launch of the James Webb Space Telescope.

The plan allows for \$17.7 billion for NASA, a decrease of 0.3 percent, or \$50 million below 2012.

Much of that decline comes from moving education programs for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, known by the acronym STEM, out of NASA as part of a major reshuffle.



US President Barack Obama (R) looks through a microscope at brain cells with Dr Marston Linehan (C) as he tours the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD, September 30, 2009. The \$31 billion for the NIH was unchanged, but more cash would go to Alzheimer's research, HIV prevention and treatment, family planning, mental health services and gun violence prevention, the budget said.

Ninety STEM programs across 11 different agencies, all worth a total of \$180 million, are being funneled into the Department of Education, in what Obama's budget described as "the single biggest consolidation proposed this year."

NASA administrator Charles Bolden said the budget "reflects fiscal realities and aligns NASA's full spectrum of activities in order to meet the president's challenge to send humans to asteroid in 2025 and to Mars in the 2030."

Both job and budget cuts were foreseen for the Environmental

Protection Agency, which would receive \$8.2 billion, or a 3.5 percent cut below the 2012 enacted level.

The \$296 million decrease at the EPA would be achieved, in part, through "consolidating positions and restructuring the workforce to ensure the Agency has the necessary skills for the current era of environmental protection."

Meanwhile, funding would rise for the National Science Foundation, with an increase of \$593 million over 2012 to an annual \$7.6 billion budget.

Another budget boost was included for Health and Human Services as Obama's healthcare reform plan continues to be implemented in the coming years.

The \$80.1 billion he called for at HHS represents \$3.9 billion above the 2012 enacted level, including \$31.3 billion for the National Institutes of Health, or \$471 million over 2012.

More cash would go to Alzheimer's research, HIV prevention and treatment, family planning, mental health services and gun violence prevention.

NIH director Francis Collins described the plan as "encouraging."

The Department of Energy would also get an eight percent boost over 2012, with \$28.4 billion in discretionary funds.

The DOE rise would "position the United States to compete as a world leader in clean energy" as well as respond to climate change and "modernize the nuclear weapons stockpile and infrastructure," it said.

The plan would eliminate \$4 billion in "annual unwarranted and unnecessary subsidies to the oil, gas, and coal industries," it said.

Other savings would be achieved through some modifications to Medicare, such as aligning drug payment policies for people over 65 with those for low-income people receiving Medicaid, saving \$123 billion over the next 10 years, it said.

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