University of Colorado
Boulder | Colorado Springs | Denver | Anschutz

Office of Government Relations
1800 Grant St., Suite 800
035 UCA
Denver, CO 80203

t 303 246 7040

Overview of the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior Environment Appropriations Act, 2026

January 9, 2026

The U.S. House approved H.R. 6938, the *Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior Environment Appropriations Act, 2026* on Jan. 8 with a bipartisan 397-28 vote. The Senate will hold a procedural vote on the legislation on Jan. 12. The bill's path to passage in the Senate is tighter with amendments to preserve funding for the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, CO and to prevent the administration from seizing control of Venezuelan oil both in play.

The three-bill package, released on Jan. 5, establishes funding levels and spending directives through Sept. 30, 2026 for key federal science agencies. The minibus package consists of the Commerce, Justice, Science; Energy and Water Development; and Interior and Environment funding bills. If passed, six of the twelve annual federal funding bills will be law, following an historic 43-day federal government shutdown, which lasted from Oct. 1 to Nov. 12. Lawmakers enacted the Legislative Branch; Military Construction and Veterans Affairs; and Agriculture, Rural Development and Food and Drug Administration funding bills in November as part of their deal to reopen the government. Stopgap funding for federal agencies and programs set by the remaining six funding bills, including for the U.S. Department of Education and National Institutes of Health (NIH), expires on Jan. 30 absent additional legislative action.

This latest three-bill bundle establishes funding levels for some of CU's most important research agency partners, including the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and more.

Overall, funding is flat or slightly down for most federal research agencies – a win in the current fiscal environment. Lawmakers rejected the White House's request for deep agency cuts and program eliminations at federal science agencies.

Notably, the legislation acknowledges "room for improvement" in the current indirect cost structure contained in the Uniform Guidance, which reimburses colleges and universities for facilities, compliance and other overhead expenses that support federal research

grants on campuses. The bill calls for greater transparency in the system and points to new models, including the Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) model, as meriting consideration. It also directs the Department of Commerce, NSF, NASA and DOE to use fiscal year 2024 negotiated indirect cost rates and prohibits these agencies from changing the reimbursement structure this fiscal year. The White House tried to cap indirect cost rates at 15 percent at NIH, NSF, DOD and DOE last year, however the courts stopped implementation of the policies.

Following are budget highlights for agencies of interest to CU.

CU congressionally directed spending (earmark) requests:

- $1,877,000 for CU Bouder to acquire scientific equipment to launch CU Hearth, an educational, training and research facility focused on urban wildfires. CU Hearth will centralize the tools for researching and communicating the impact of urban wildfires to support impacted communities. This request was championed by Rep. Neguse and Sens. Bennet and Hickenlooper.
- $366,427 for UCCS's Cybersecurity Program to acquire educational equipment to expand the program and research equipment for the Cyber Engineering Labs to enhance student preparation in Space and Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity. The project was championed by Rep. Crank.
- $788,000 for CU Denver's Quantum Information Technology Learning Laboratory to acquire equipment to expand its capacity to train students to enter the quantum workforce. The project was championed by Sens. Bennet and Hickenlooper.

FY 2026 federal funding highlights:

National Science Foundation

- $8.75 billion, a decrease of $310 million or 3.4 percent below FY25. This is $4.85 billion or 124.2 percent above the President's request. This includes $7.176 billion for NSF Research and Related Activities.
- Directs NSF to "equitably distribute funding to support all basic research directorates" and prohibits NSF from reducing any directorate's budget by more than five percent.
- $30 million for the National Artificial Intelligence Research Resource (NAIRR) pilot. CU Boulder is leading a key working group under the NAIRR pilot.

- $200 million for the NSF's Regional Innovation Engines. CU Boulder and CU Denver are partners on the ASCEND Engine in Colorado and Wyoming.
- $185 million for activities authorized under the National Quantum Initiative Act, including $50 million for NSF's National Quantum Information Science Research Centers. CU Boulder leads NSF's Quantum Systems through Entangled Science and Engineering (Q-SEnSE) Institute.
- Directs NSF to notify Congress 30 days in advance of any planned divestment through transfer, decommissioning, termination, or deconstruction of any NSF-owned facilities over $2.5 million.
- $938 million for NSF STEM Education, a decrease of $216 million or 19 percent from FY25. This includes $285 million, level funding, for NSF's Graduate Research Fellowship Program.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

- $24.4 billion, a decrease of $400 million or 1.6 percent below FY25. This is $5.63 billion or 30 percent above the President's request.
- $7.25 billion for NASA's Science Mission Directorate, a decrease of $84 million or 1.1 percent from FY25. This is $3.34 billion or 86 percent above the President's request. This includes:
    - $2.153 billion for Earth Science
    - $2.541 billion for Planetary Science
    - $1.595 billion for Astrophysics
    - $874.8 million for Heliophysics
    - $86 million for Biological and Physical Science
- Directs NASA to "not propose to transfer Science funding out of the Directorate" and reaffirms congressional support for "the scientific value and exploration provided by NASA Science missions in Earth Science, Planetary Science, Astrophysics, Heliophysics, and Biological and Physical Sciences."
- Specifies funding levels for the following Planetary Science missions:
    - $300 million for NEO Surveyor
    - $99 million for DAVINCI
    - $500 million for Dragonfly
    - $10 million for New Horizons
    - $110 million for Mars Future Missions
- Funding levels are also specified within Heliophysics for three missions:
    - $25 million for the Parker Solar Probe
    - $100 million for Geospace Dynamics Constellation

    - $109.5 million for HelioSwarm
- Congress also provides the following levels for NASA's other directorates:
    - $935 million, level funding, for Aeronautics
    - $921 million, a $179 million or 16 percent decrease, for Space Technology
    - $7.783 billion, a $117 million or 1.5 percent increase, for Human Exploration
    - $4.175 billion, a $45 million or 1 decrease, for Space Operations.
    - $143 million for STEM Engagement, level funding, including $58 million, also level funding, for NASA's Space Grant Program. The White House proposed eliminating NASA STEM Engagement and Space Grant. CU Boulder administers the Colorado Space Grant Consortium
- $40.5 million, level funding, for Space Weather.
- Expresses concern about reported facility and building closures at Goddard Space Flight Center and directs NASA to contract with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine to report on what facilities are needed for NASA's long-term mission success.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- $6.171 billion for NOAA, a decrease of $12 billion or 0.2 percent from FY25. This is $1.66 billion or 37 percent above the President's request.
- $589 million for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), a decrease of $67 million or 10 percent from FY25. The White House proposed eliminating OAR.
- $104 million, level funding, for NOAA's Cooperative Institutes (CI), the program that supports CU Boulder's Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES). The White House proposed eliminating the CI national network.
- $17 million for NOAA's Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments program, a decrease of $3 million or 15 percent from FY 25. This program supports CU Boulder's Western Water Assessment. The White House proposed eliminating the RISA national network.
- Adopts the President's proposal to transition the U.S. Weather Research Program, Tornado Severe Storm Research/Phased Array Radar and Joint Technology Transfer Initiative activities from OAR to the National Weather Service.

National Institute for Standards and Technology

- $1.184 billion for NIST, a decrease of $27 million or 2 percent from FY25. This is $351 million or 42 percent above the President's request.
- $844 million for NIST Scientific and Technical Research Services, a decrease of $13 million or 1.5 percent from FY25.

- $128 million for NIST Construction of Research Facilities, an increase of $40 million or 45 percent from FY25.

Department of the Interior

- $1.42 billion for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), a decrease of $30 million or 2 percent from FY25. This is $528 million or 59 percent above the President's request.
- $64 million for USGS's Climate Adaptation Science Centers, an increase of $1 million or 1.6 percent from FY25. This program supports CU Boulder's North Central Climate Adaptation Science Center. The White House proposed eliminating the CASC national network.
- $6 million, level funding, for the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP), which is jointly funded by Interior and the U.S. Forest Service.
- $8.8 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency, a decrease of $320 million or 3.5 percent from FY25. This includes $744 million for EPA's Office of Science and Technology, a decrease of $12 million or 1.6 percent from FY25.
- $207 million, level funding, for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The White House proposed eliminating the NEH.

Department of Energy

- $49 billion for the Department of Energy, a decrease of $1 billion or 2 percent from FY25. This is nearly $3 billion or 6.5 percent above the President's request.
- $8.4 billion, for DOE's Office of Science, an increase of $160 million or 2 percent from FY25. This includes:
    - $2.678 billion for Basic Energy Sciences
    - $1.235 billion for High Energy Physics
    - $1.116 billion for Advanced Scientific Computing Research
    - $854 million for Biological and Environmental Research
    - $866 million for Nuclear Physics
    - $806 million for Fusion Energy Sciences
    - $255 million for quantum information science
- $350 million, for DOE's Advanced Projects Agency Energy, a decrease of $110 million or 24 percent from FY25.
- $3.1 billion, for the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy (EERE), a decrease of $360 million or 10 percent from FY25. This is $2.2 billion or 249 percent above the President's request. EERE funds the National Laboratory of the Rockies in Golden, CO, and partners with CU Boulder through our joint institute, the Renewable and Sustainable Energy Institute (RASEI).

- Directs DOE to carry out award terminations in accordance with published procedures in the Department of Energy Guide to Financial Assistance published in 2024. Prohibits DOE from terminating, renegotiating or rescoping federal awards that no longer effectuate program goals or agency priorities.
- Expresses strong support for Quantum Computing, Exascale Computing, and AI.