



Dr John Holdren
Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
725 17th Street Room 5228
Washington, DC 20502
USA

October 21, 2011

Dear Dr Holdren,

On July 6, 2011, the US House Appropriations Committee released the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill for the fiscal year 2012. This bill recommends a reduction by \$1.6 billion below FY2011 in NASA funding. As part of this, the bill calls for a termination of all funding to the NASA-led James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) which enjoys significant contributions from the European Space Agency (ESA), the Canadian Space Agency (CSA), European (including Swiss) astronomers, and European space industry over the past 10 years. The severe consequences of executive execution of the proposed legislation have initiated this letter from the Swiss community of professional astronomers.

The international astrophysical community strongly supports having the JWST build on, and extend, the broad scientific success of the Hubble Space Telescope (HST). The JWST is not only a successor to the HST: it will open up new and unique scientific avenues by exploring a regime of the electromagnetic spectrum that perfectly matches the requirement to detect the first light in the Universe and enable fundamental advances in understanding the origins of galaxies, stars, planets, and even life.

But, perhaps, more than that, the JWST will play the same crucial educational role currently filled by HST in providing the people of the world (and not only the professional scientists) with breathtaking images and understanding of the Universe and our place within it. Since the HST was launched, there are several generations of young people who have achieved basic scientific literacy in part through educational opportunities enabled by it.

The Swiss Society for Astrophysics and Astronomy (SSAA) is very concerned that cancelling the JWST program would negatively affect the progress of our knowledge of the Universe as well as the scientific awareness gained by the public from the HST. Our society supports the efforts to continue the development of the JWST and expresses its hope that the JWST will be successfully completed.

Prof. Daniel Schaerer
President of the SSAA