

Testimony of
Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson
Before the
Budget Committee of the House of Representatives
March 8, 2001

Chairman Nussle and Ranking Member Spratt, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today to express my principal interests regarding the Budget Resolution for FY2002.

First, I need to express my deep concern about the President's decision to hold the rate of growth in discretionary programs to 4% . I must align myself with the concerns expressed by Senate Budget Chairman Pete Domenici who has repeatedly stated that a 4% rate of growth is not enough. These discretionary programs represent many of the government programs which people relied upon in their everyday lives. When the rate of growth for those who need the services provided by a program is greater than the rate of growth in program funding, there is a reduction in the amount and type of services. A failure to keep pace with growth means that someone will not be served or will receive far less than they need. We must stop engaging in "fuzzy math." These are not mere numbers. These are real people. And as their elected representatives we have a duty to ensure their well-being. We fail in that duty if we do not

provide the resources they need.

Now with that general overview, let me share my specific concerns with you:

The priorities of the Administration include several proposals concerning the National Science Foundation (NSF). Chairman Greenspan stated that "On the issue of research, there is just no question that if you're going to have technology as the base of your economy, which we do, research is crucial." We simply cannot expect our Nation to continue on its path of superiority if we do not provide the proper tools for our students to do so. These include a Math and Science Partnership Initiative, a study of the effect of NSF grant size and duration on possibly creating inefficiencies in the academic research enterprise, language requiring NSF to develop improved procedures for managing large facility projects and language to set up a blue ribbon panel to determine the pros and cons of transferring all of NSF's astronomy programs to NASA. These proposed initiatives have so much to do with increasing the present budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF).

To succeed in this effort, it is necessary that we pass a budget that provides at least a 15% increase for the NSF. The present increase of 1.3% by the Administration is inadequate. The Administration has requested a 20% increase for NIH, while providing so little for NSF, its fellow science entity. The current proposal suggested by the Administration cuts programs such as basic science, renewable energy and oil and gas research and development by about \$1 billion.

Second, I have a great concern about education funding. It is clear that America needs to increase its efforts to improve the competence of our students. Such an initiative is said to cost the nation around \$200

million (\$1 billion over 5 years). Unfortunately, the Administration has not included this in its budget. It is impossible for NSF to continue its work if it is unable to increase the number of grants across the nation.

Further, an increase in education funding must include additional funding for Historically Black Colleges and University and Hispanic Serving Institutions. If this nation is truly supposed to provide opportunity for all people, we must adequately fund the academic, research and capitol projects of these institutions.

Thirdly, we must assure that our veterans receive competent care in sound facilities. That is why I believe we must increased funding for the Veteran's Administration's capital construction projects in the areas with greatest demographic growth. As we all know, Texas and other areas of the South and West are experiencing phenomenal population growth. We must have enough forethought to dedicate resources for capital funding to those areas of growth.

Fourth, we cannot forget the important role played by transportation in the commerce of this nation and our obligation to assure that travel by air and road is safe. Therefore, we must assure full funding for Aviation programs consistent with AIR-21 and especially FAA's Facilities and Equipment Account which would permit air traffic control modernization. I can assure you that every member of the traveling public would consider this money well spent.

Fifth, we cannot forget the necessity to engage in responsible conservation and infrastructure improvement. We should fund the Land Conservation, Preservation, and Infrastructure Improvement Program and \$1.76 billion and full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund at \$900 million (consistent with last year agreement in the interior appropriations bill)

Finally, we must assure an across the board increase in funding of at least 10% for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and all federal agencies which handle discrimination issues, including the EEOC; OFCCP and the Offices of Civil Rights in each federal agency and department. These agencies have not had an increase in funding for 6 years. We must assure that the agencies which investigate, monitor and remedy the evil of discrimination have adequate funds to do the job. Each person who lives and works in this country should have the assurance that they will not be denied opportunity based on race, gender, religion and national origin. If discriminatory activities occur, we must assure that people have access to a remedy. We must put our money where our rhetoric is. If we hate discrimination, we must fund those agencies charged with protecting its victims.

Again, Chairman Nussle, Ranking Member Spratt and Members of the Committee, I thank you for this opportunity. I want to place my complete statement in the record and would be happy to answer any questions.