March and April have been active months for the appropriations process, and we have been active in Congressional communication. The FRS has visited 12 Congressional offices in addition to White House Office of Science and Technology Policy staff to advocate for strong planetary science funding in FY2017. DPS committee members also met with relevant Congressional committee staff to discuss conference travel restrictions. We will continue Congressional outreach though the coming months at opportune times.

The Senate has marked up its version of the Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill, and the House is likely to do the same soon. It’s great to see this key legislation make progress and we will continue to advocate for the appropriations process to go forward in regular order, although it is still highly likely that there will be a continuing resolution through the election. The Senate bill calls for a low number for planetary science ($1,356 B [2]) and this past week the FRS expressed its disappointment with Congressional staff. The House number promises to be very strong so that the reconciliation between the bills brings planetary to a healthy level — we need to keep the pressure on! Our ask to Congress has been for a 5% increase over the FY2016 appropriated level; we acknowledge that that is a tough ask for many members of Congress, so we are emphasizing that planetary can be no lower than FY2016, which is $1.631 B.
The Congressional leave-behind materials can be found at the FRS section of the DPS website. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Makenzie Lystrup [3].