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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas

52nd District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES  
RANKING MEMBER, TASK FORCE ON  
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AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,  
ILLICIT FINANCE, AND INTERNATIONAL  
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
House Appropriations Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

I am requesting funding for the Southwestern College Instructional Planetarium Upgrade project in fiscal year 2027, in the amount of \$1,132,000. The entity to receive the funding is the Southwestern Community College District, located at 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista, CA 91910.

The Southwestern Community College District serves 32,420 students annually and it is the only public institution of higher education serving southern San Diego County. This project will upgrade and modernize the Southwestern Community College District's instructional planetarium, which is a primary instructional tool for those pursuing the Astronomy Associate in Science Degree. The project will include upgrades to the full-dome digital projection system and external-input capabilities. These upgrades will allow the district to expand immersive STEM course instruction capacity and increase K-12/dual enrollment. The project would also support a developing collaboration with the U.S. Navy's Mariner Skills Training Center Pacific (MSTCPAC), a Navy training center that provides mariner skills and navigation-related instruction. STEM training generally and astronomical training in particular is especially important in southern San Diego, because Naval Base San Diego, which is located in the Southwestern Community College District, is a major employer in the region and the home of the bulk of the surface ships of the United States Pacific Fleet. These upgrades will allow Southwestern College to better prepare students for careers in the Navy and related industries by supporting celestial navigation learning through structured sky simulation and targeted instructional modules.

This project is a good use of federal funds because it will provide economic development benefits for southern San Diego County. Investing in upgrades to this instructional planetarium will help the Southwestern Community College District better equip students with the skills they need to succeed in the local workforce—whether through careers in the Navy or related industries, or in STEM fields generally.

The project has a federal nexus because the funding provided is for purposes authorized by 42 U.S.C. §§ 5305(a)(1) & (2).

This project has broad support from a large network of partners and stakeholders, including Chula Vista Mayor John McCann and California State Assemblymember David Alvarez.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Thank you for your consideration of funding for these programs. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact my Senior Legislative Assistant, Michael Rivas, at [michael.rivas@mail.house.gov](mailto:michael.rivas@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juan Vargas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress