



July 11, 2011

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman, House Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norman Dicks
Ranking Member, House Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers & Ranking Member Dicks,

As representatives of U.S. science, engineering, and higher education organizations, we write to you in strong support for the federal research and development budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF), and its mission—created over 60 years ago—to advance research across a broad spectrum of disciplines, research that has fueled American economic growth for decades.

NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports **all** disciplines in a balanced portfolio that uses the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit.

Unfortunately, NSF research is now being threatened by attempts to trivialize specific research grants and to challenge the scientific merit review process. As you prepare to debate the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012, the undersigned organizations stand in strong opposition to legislative attempts to undermine the peer review process by seeking to defund research grants that have already been awarded after extensive evaluation by independent scientific review panels.

Furthermore, we strongly oppose attempts to eliminate or substantially reduce funding for specific areas of science such as the NSF Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE).

In 2006, Alan Leshner, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, testified before the Senate in support of NSF SBE research: “Every major issue facing modern society and every major issue facing our economic competitiveness will ultimately be multidisciplinary in nature...[requiring] the integration of the physical sciences or biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences.”

We would like to highlight some specific examples that demonstrate the interdependence of scientific fields and their contribution to society. The revolution in computer technology and the transformation of analog data into digital records are opening up new opportunities to bridge the biological and social sciences, leading to new partnerships and collaborations that will improve the interpretation of brain imaging. In addition, this country will be investing millions of dollars in new technology over the coming decade, and the technology must be designed with humans in mind (i.e., cognitive limitations, errors in judgment, responses to stress and organizational climate) to avoid wasting limited resources.

Furthermore, social scientists, working with computer scientists, have developed Geographical Information Systems (GIS). As an example of technology transfer, this in turn created a multi-billion dollar GIS industry. The research supported in the mid-1980s at the NSF-funded National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA) has been applied by states, counties, and localities for many purposes, from urban planning to disaster response, evidenced in New York City during the September 11, 2001, attacks and the creation of thousands of maps to assist in the aftermath. Simply put, we need all scientists and scientific disciplines working — alone and together — to advance our knowledge base.

We recognize the challenge that our nation faces in addressing the deficit and revitalizing our national economy; however, defunding specific grants or eliminating entire sets of disciplines, such as those represented by the SBE program, sets a dangerous precedent that, in the end, will inhibit scientific progress and our international competitiveness. Congress must exercise its oversight responsibilities, but second-guessing the scientific process could have a chilling effect on scientists and young people considering a future in science. The country cannot afford to lose the incredible talent, experience, and energies of its scientists, regardless of their discipline.

The undersigned organizations urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise by ensuring that the NSF and its independent scientific panels determine where the best scientific opportunities are and how to absorb any potential reductions to its budget. Allocating federal investments competitively through scientific merit review is the very process that has led this country to be the world leader in science. We encourage you to provide Congressional oversight by protecting that process rather than allowing others to threaten a critical contributor to our innovative spirit and knowledge base.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Science & Technology Research in America
American Academy of Environmental Engineers
American Association for Public Opinion Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Anatomists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Biological Safety Association
American Chemical Society
American Economic Association
American Educational Research Association
American Historical Association
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Mathematical Society
American Physical Society
American Physiological Society
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Engineering Education

American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Civil Engineers
American Society of Plumbing Engineers
American Sociological Association
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
American Statistical Association
APMI International
Arctic Research Consortium of the U.S.
Arizona State University
Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback (AAPB)
Association for Psychological Science
Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography
Association for Women in Mathematics
Association for Women in Science (AWIS)
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association of Independent Research Institutes (AIRI)
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Behavior Genetics Association
Binghamton University, State University of New York
Biophysical Society
Brown University
Cognitive Science Society
Columbia University
Computing Research Association
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Consortium of Universities for the Advancement of Hydrologic Science
Council of Environmental Deans and Directors
Council on Undergraduate Research
Crop Science Society of America
Duke University
Ecological Society of America
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Florida State University
Geochemical Society
Geological Society of America
Georgia Institute of Technology
History of Science Society
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
Indiana University
Institute of Food Technologists
International Society for Developmental Psychobiology
Law and Society Association

LEARN Coalition
Linguistic Society of America
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Massachusetts Neuropsychological Society
Materials Research Society
Mathematical Association of America
Michigan State University
Midwest Political Science Association
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Academy of Neuropsychology
National Center for Women & Informational Technology (NCWIT)
National Communication Association
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON)
National Opinion Research Center (NORC)
Natural Science Collections Alliance
New York University
North American Regional Science Council
North Carolina State University
Northern Illinois University
Oregon State University
Ornithological Council
Penn State University
Population Association of America
Psychonomic Society
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Research!America
Rural Sociological Society
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Social Science Research Council
Society for Anthropological Sciences
Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology
Society for Computers in Psychology (SCiP)
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Judgment and Decision Making
Society for Mathematical Psychology
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Personality and Social Psychology
Society for Psychophysiological Research (SPR)
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Society of Experimental Social Psychology
Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology
Society of Multivariate Experimental Psychology
Soil Science Society of America
SPIE, The International Society for Optics and Photonics

Stanford University
Stony Brook University, State University of New York
The Electrochemical Society
The Ohio State University
The Science Coalition
Tulane University
U.S. Public Policy Council of the Association for Computing Machinery (USACM)
UCLA
University at Buffalo
University of California Berkeley
University of California Davis
University of California Irvine
University of California Merced
University of California Riverside
University of California San Diego
University of California San Francisco
University of California Santa Barbara
University of California Santa Cruz
University of California System
University of Chicago
University of Idaho
University of Kansas
University of Michigan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Pittsburgh
University of Virginia
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Vanderbilt University
Washington University in St. Louis
Yale University

copies: Members, House Appropriations Committee