

May 21, 2014

The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
House Science, Space and Technology Committee
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
House Science, Space and Technology Committee
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

On behalf of the undersigned scientific organizations, we write to express our concerns with certain features of H.R. 4186, the *Frontiers in Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act of 2014*.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is an important engine that helps power our nation's economic growth. Through its competitive, peer-reviewed research grants, NSF supports the development of new knowledge that will help to solve the most challenging problems facing society, and will lead to new scientific discoveries, patents, and jobs. Many of the innovative ideas that have enhanced this country's economic competitiveness or enhanced the quality of our citizens' lives have originated with research support from the NSF. The agency's education and training programs are helping to ensure that the next generation has the scientific, technical, and mathematical skills needed by employers. These efforts, however, require a sustained federal investment. Unpredictable swings in federal funding disrupt research programs, create uncertainty in the research community, and stall the development of the next great idea.

Funding for basic research has grown minimally in recent years, especially after inflation is taken into account. Given the importance of innovation in stimulating economic growth and maintaining U.S. global competitiveness, basic research at the NSF should be supported in a sustainable manner. The funding levels proposed in the current version of the FIRST Act will not close the innovation gap in our country.

We wish to bring two concerns to your attention. First, we represent a large number of scientists who are concerned that the current bill specifies funding allocations for NSF's research directorates. The *American COMPETES Act of 2007* and the reauthorization bill in 2010 did not delve into this level of detail. Nor do annual appropriations bills set funding levels within NSF's Research and Related Activities account. Our nation has benefited greatly by allowing the National Science Board and leadership of NSF to make strategic investments in research programs. We think the existing process in which Congress does not limit or promote specific funding levels for the various research directorates has served the nation well and should be maintained.

Second, Section 115 of H.R. 4186 addresses misrepresentation of research results. Although we agree that falsification and fabrication of data and results are serious issues, it

is important to remember that this rarely happens. Moreover, the Inspector General for NSF already has the authority to investigate accusations of scientific misconduct. The new requirement is unnecessary and signals a fundamental mistrust of scientists. At a time when the nation is asking the scientific and engineering community to innovate, solve problems, and drive economic growth, it is disturbing to think that this measure would put into law the assertion that scientists are untrustworthy.

We remain committed to working with the House Science, Space and Technology Committee to ensure that the United States remains a global leader in scientific research. We are happy to work with you to explore ways to reauthorize the NSF so that it remains the global model for fundamental scientific research and education.

Sincerely,



Joseph Travis, Ph.D.
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*American Institute of
Biological Sciences*



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President
*Association of Ecosystem
Research Centers*



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Cc: House Science, Space and Technology Committee Members