

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
142 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

5 June 2015

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

The undersigned geoscience organizations and our tens of thousands of Earth and space scientist members urge you to recognize that investment in all areas of science is essential to the prosperity and well-being of the United States and its citizens. As your subcommittee works to draft the fiscal year 2016 (FY16) appropriations for the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) account, we respectfully request that you continue to fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) research and related activities account without prioritizing certain directorates over others. We strongly encourage the Senate take a balanced approach to science appropriations that does not pick winners and losers amongst federally-supported science at NSF.

The U.S. system of scientific research and development has been immensely successful over the last half-century. This success is due in no small part to the fact that science in the U.S. has remained largely insulated from political pressures and interference. Key scientific focus areas have been driven and guided by the scientific community and federal science agencies through a hallmark system of peer review and advisory committees. By allowing those with the best knowledge of the science to set the paths for advancement, Congress has helped America's scientific enterprise flourish.

Unfortunately, the House CJS bill report that passed out of committee sets an unnecessary and potentially deleterious precedent by prioritizing certain directorates over others and directing NSF to shift 70% of its research funding to the directorates for Mathematical and Physical Sciences, Computer and Information Science, Engineering, and Biological Sciences. As a result, the Geosciences Directorate and the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate would be cut by over 16%, or \$253 million, compared to FY15. NSF-funded geoscience research and education lead to a better understanding of, and technology to provide for, critical national needs, such as water and mineral resources, energy independence, environmental issues, Earth's climate and ocean system, and mitigation of natural hazards. America's economic competitiveness, public safety, and national security rely on our commitment to invest in the geosciences.

Since 1950, the mission of NSF has been to "promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense." Cutting the geosciences, which save lives, create jobs, and provide economic and national security, does not serve the mission and purpose of NSF.

As your subcommittee works to write and mark-up the FY16 appropriations for CJS, our organizations remain committed to helping you and your staff continue to advance American scientific research and education.

Sincerely,

American Geophysical Union
American Geosciences Institute
Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography
Association of American Geographers
Association of American State Geologists
The Board of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute
Clay Minerals Society
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Ecological Society of America
Geological Society of America
Geosciences Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research
International Association of Hydrogeologists / U.S. National Chapter
National Association of Geoscience Teachers
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Ground Water Association
Society of Economic Geologists
Soil Science Society of America
SRI International
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
University of Oregon
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution