



Ecological Society of America
1990 M Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

July 24, 2015

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Senate Commerce Science and
Transportation Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Senate Commerce, Science and
Transportation Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Cory Gardner
United States Senate
354 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary Peters
United States Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, Senator Gardner and Senator Peters:

On behalf of the Ecological Society of America, the nation's largest professional society of ecologists, I want to commend you for seeking input from the scientific community as your committee seeks to draft legislation to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act.

Basic scientific research is the foundation of innovation. Advancements in basic research set the stage for U.S. leadership and maintaining our nation's place as leaders in discovery and innovation. Federal investment in scientific discovery and technology is vital to maintaining U.S. economic leadership globally.

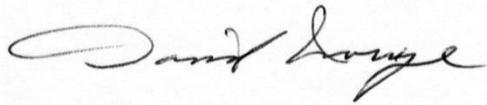
Our nation's scientific enterprise has been tremendously successful over the years in large part because it has remained insulated from political pressures. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has delivered enormous value to U.S. taxpayers by relying on rigorous merit review to identify the most promising research ideas across all disciplines. The previous two NSF authorization bills allowed NSF to determine research priorities and funding for each scientific directorate. NSF currently determines its research priorities through use of decadal reports, convening expert workshops, and continuously gathering input from the science community. Setting authorization levels according to directorate would reduce the flexibility NSF requires to take advantage of unanticipated discoveries and insights, which are coming ever more rapidly in the modern age.

To that end, we respectfully request that this bill not authorize funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) by directorate, but maintain the agency's existing capacity to determine the budget priorities for each directorate. Authorizing NSF funding by directorate would leave the agency more vulnerable to the partisan motivations of whatever political party controls Congress. A strong COMPETES reauthorization recognizes the importance of all fields of science, including the biological, geological and social sciences, and maintains the agency's flexibility to adapt to unanticipated scientific discoveries.

The Society also hopes that draft legislation promotes Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and works to increase participation among women and underrepresented minorities in STEM fields. Given our nation's increasing demographic changes, it is vital to utilize every available avenue that increases participation in STEM fields among all American citizens.

We sincerely hope this input and that of others from the scientific community will lead to the development of a bill that secures strong bipartisan support in the spirit of the first America COMPETES Act. On behalf of the nation's ecological science community, we thank you for your outreach and your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Inouye". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being more prominent than the last name "Inouye".

Dr. David W. Inouye
ESA President