

May 20, 2013

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

Dear Chairman Smith:

The undersigned organizations are concerned about recent Congressional actions that call into question the National Science Foundation's (NSF) merit review process for awarding research grants. NSF's merit review process relies upon the expertise of leading scientists and engineers, and it has a proven track record in supporting outstanding, fundamental research across all disciplines of science and engineering. Indeed, NSF's expert merit review process is a model for identifying research projects that are worthy of taxpayer-funded support and have the best opportunity to advance science and innovation. If the criterion for awarding grants shifts away from scientific merit as the primary goal, the quality of research proposals will suffer, as will the science and engineering that is ultimately funded. This would have negative impacts on our nation's entire research and innovation enterprise.

Research and education projects supported by NSF contribute to the development of the knowledge base needed for pushing the frontiers of the biological, mathematical, physical, geo, computer, social, behavioral, and economic sciences, and engineering. NSF support is also critical to scientific and engineering advancements requiring interdisciplinary collaboration where insights from one field inform questions posed in another and tools that are developed by one discipline are used to conduct experiments in another. The NSF merit review system has a tradition of identifying the research that will enhance the knowledge base of these fields and interdisciplinary exploration.

Funding basic research in all NSF-supported disciplines should be a national priority. Support of this goal should not force significant and potentially detrimental tradeoffs between one field of science and another. In creating NSF, Congress removed its political influence from the evaluation and selection process for awarding research grants, establishing a peer-review process to determine the best candidates for research funding. While past Congresses and administrations have at times identified areas of science for funding emphasis at NSF such as in nanotechnology, robotics, information technology, and cybersecurity, they have prudently and appropriately allowed these research areas to be informed by priorities set by the National Science Board and other national scientific advisory committees and to be guided by the science community through a strong system of merit review.

It is imperative that NSF's system of support for basic research be based upon excellence, competitive scientific merit, and peer-review. While Congress does play an important role in oversight of federally funded research, it should avoid legislative attempts that could undermine a decades-long system of success and ultimately impede discovery and innovation.

Sincerely,

Academy Health

American Anthropological Association  
American Association for Dental Research  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Association of Anatomists  
American Association of Physics Teachers  
American Astronomical Society  
American Chemical Society  
American Economic Association  
American Educational Research Association  
American Geophysical Union  
American Geosciences Institute  
American Institute of Biological Sciences  
American Institute of Physics  
American Mathematical Society  
American Physical Society  
American Physiological Society  
American Political Science Association  
American Psychiatric Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Engineering Education  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Civil Engineers  
American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists  
American Society of Limnology and Oceanography  
American Society of Plant Biologists  
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
American Sociological Association  
American Statistical Association  
ASME, American Society of Mechanical Engineers  
Association for Environmental & Engineering Geologists  
Association for Psychological Science  
Association for Women in Mathematics  
Association for Women in Science  
Association of American Geographers  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of Ecosystem Research Centers  
Association of Population Centers  
Association of Research Libraries

AVS – Science and Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing  
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences  
Biophysical Society  
Boise State University  
Botanical Society of America  
Center on Aging  
Coalition for the Advancement of Health Through Behavioral and Social Sciences Research  
Coalition for the Life Sciences  
Coalition to Promote Research  
Cognitive Science Society  
Consortium for Ocean Leadership  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
Council on Undergraduate Research  
Crop Science Society of America  
Ecological Society of America  
Entomological Society of America  
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences  
Genetics Society of America  
Geological Society of America  
History of Science Society  
HIV Medicine Association  
Hubbs Sea World Research Institute  
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society  
IEEE-USA  
Incorporated Research Institutes of Seismology  
Indiana University  
Institute for Coastal Science and Policy, East Carolina University  
International Society for Developmental Psychobiology  
Long Term Ecological Research Network  
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium  
Materials Research Society  
Mathematical Association of America  
Mental Health America  
National Association of Graduate-Professional Students  
National Association of Marine Laboratories  
National Communication Association  
National Ground Water Association  
National Science Teachers Association  
National Society of Professional Engineers  
National Women's Health Network  
Natural Science Collections Alliance  
Population Association of America  
Research!America  
Romberg Tiburon Center, San Francisco State University  
SAGE Publications Inc.  
Seismological Society of America  
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, University of Georgia  
Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology  
Society for Computers in Psychology

Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics  
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology  
Society for Judgment and Decision Making  
Society for Mathematical Psychology  
Society for Neuroscience  
Society for Personality and Social Psychology  
Society for Research in Child Development  
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues)  
Society for Women's Health Research  
Society of Experimental Social Psychology  
Society of Multivariate Experimental Psychology  
Soil Science Society of America  
Southeast Community Research Center  
SPIE, The International Society for Optics and Photonics  
The Optical Society  
The Psychonomic Society  
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research  
University of Florida  
University of New Mexico  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution  
Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Southern California

*Please contact Samuel M. Rankin, III, Chair of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF), at 202-588-1100 or [smr@ams.org](mailto:smr@ams.org) for more information.*