



April 21, 2015

Dear Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Committee,

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world's largest general scientific society, submits the following comments on H.R. 1806, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015.

In April 2013, AAAS joined a broad coalition of scientific and engineering societies, higher education institutions, and private-sector businesses in endorsing a set of Guiding Principles for the America COMPETES Act Reauthorization. It is in light of these Principles that we express concerns about several aspects of H.R. 1806.

The Guiding Principles advocate for steady and sustained real growth in the major federal research agencies. In these difficult fiscal times, we appreciate the top-line funding increases authorized for NSF, DOE Office of Science, and NIST for FY16. However, we are concerned about the potential impact of deep cuts to DOE programs such as ARPA-E, EERE and BER, as well as the NSF SBE and GEO directorates. Further, we would have liked to see the growth in NSF, DOE Science and NIST continued in FY17, rather than see gains eroded by inflation.

AAAS also has concerns about the approach of H.R. 1806 to authorize NSF directorates individually, thus in effect placing certain directorates over others. The Principles call for legislation that "sees funding across all disciplines of basic scientific research as a top national priority." NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports a balanced portfolio of basic research in **all** disciplines, using the scientific peer review system as the foundation for awarding research grants based on merit.

AAAS appreciates the committee's efforts to address regulatory burden and respond to past stakeholder input on a number of sections of the bill, including sections on research misconduct and research grant conditions. We encourage the committee to allow further time for assessment of new provisions, such as those involving large facilities at NSF, which may have significant ramifications.

Bringing the highest quality science to bear on societal needs is crucial to building a better future. We are thus also concerned that the limitations in Section 661 would prevent the use of high quality DOE-supported research in formulating evidence-based federal regulations.

As the Principles state: "despite the tremendous fiscal challenges currently facing the nation, now is not the time for us to back away from our commitment to increasing the productivity of our national science and technology enterprise. Indeed, maintaining our commitment is critical if the United States is to successfully compete, prosper, and be secure in the global community of the 21st century." The programs in this bill remain vitally important to fulfilling this vision. AAAS stands ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

Gerald R. Fink

Chair, AAAS Board of Directors

Herman and Margaret Sokol Professor

Whitehead Institute/Massachusetts Institute of Technology