

PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON KEY ISSUES

The association in 2013 repeatedly urged adequate federal support for research and development, through testimony and letters to policymakers, and by getting the message directly to the press and the public. AAAS also called on scientists and engineers to help communicate about climate change, and to volunteer for human rights projects, while advocating for greater awareness of scientists' contributions to society.

AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner told lawmakers at a U.S. Senate hearing that continuing to cut federal investment in scientific research would damage our nation's economy. Leshner also urged an end to the 2013 U.S. Government shutdown, which he said was impeding crucial science-related work.

ADVOCACY FOR U.S. R&D FUNDING

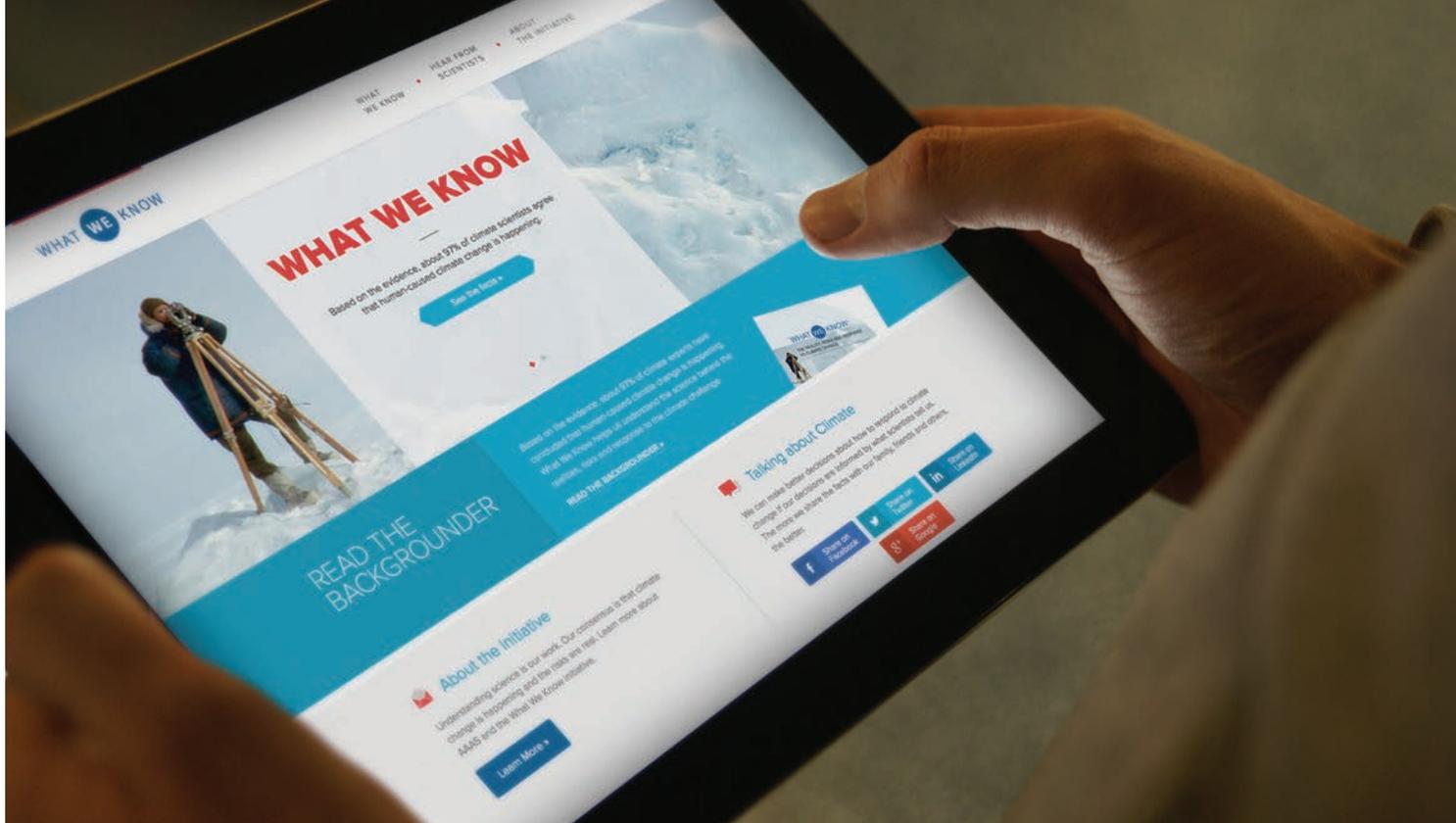
28 February. As a “fiscal cliff” threatened federal R&D investments and American competitiveness, AAAS rolled out a petition, signed by some 16,000 individuals, urging “a bipartisan compromise that moves the country on to sound fiscal footing without sacrificing our nation’s critical investments in science and technology.” The petition, sent to President Barack Obama and key congressional leadership, pointed out that R&D investments do not drive national budget deficits. It warned, further, that indiscriminate budget cuts under a budget

sequestration would undermine critical research in fields ranging from health and defense, to agriculture and the study of natural disasters. “Support for science is support for economic growth, innovation, and technological progress,” the petition noted.

14 March. AAAS strongly opposed a plan to eliminate National Science Foundation (NSF) spending on political science research grants, as proposed by the Coburn-McCain amendment. In letters to Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) and Richard Shelby (R-Alabama), AAAS noted that NSF support for political science has “contributed to important research on democratization, radicalization, terrorism, and disaster response.” In fact, AAAS wrote, “every major issue affecting our economic competitiveness will ultimately be multidisciplinary in nature, requiring the integration of the physical sciences and biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences, including political science.”

11 October. The U.S. Government shutdown dealt another “serious blow to an already beleaguered American scientific enterprise,” which saw federal R&D expenditures decline by an alarming 16.3% between 2010 and 2013, the AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner testified at a U.S. Senate hearing. “Losing our eminence in science would be a drastic consequence [of the shutdown] that likely would result in fewer foreign scientists coming to study and work in the United States, fewer U.S.-based science





and technology breakthroughs, and fewer U.S. startup companies and jobs,” Leshner told the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. “Undermining the nation’s support for research will not resolve our fiscal problem,” he added. “Instead, it will exacerbate it, slowing down the engine of discovery that drives innovation and economic growth.”

16 October. In response to a *USA Today* op-ed by Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas), AAAS wrote to the chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, urging him to support NSF-funded social and behavioral sciences research, such as studies to better understand drug addiction, and to model political stability worldwide. “Targeting specific grants or eliminating entire sets of disciplines would produce a chilling effect across the scientific community that inhibits scientific progress and our ability to tackle societal challenges,” AAAS cautioned.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

25 June. AAAS sent a letter commending President Barack Obama’s goal to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020, and to prepare the United States for the impacts of

climate change. “Global climate change caused primarily by human activities is now underway,” the AAAS CEO wrote. “It is essential that we develop strategies to adapt to ongoing changes and make communities more resilient to future changes.”

10 July. Funding from the Rockefeller Family Fund, Larry H. Linden, and others made it possible for AAAS to join the “What We Know” initiative, a collaborative effort to communicate the risks of climate change to scientists, economists, community leaders, policymakers, and the public. Scientific advisors convened by AAAS set forth three key messages. First, they said, some 97% of climate scientists accept the reality of human-caused climate change. Also, climate change is already affecting communities, and in the future, there is a small, but real chance that we could face abrupt changes with massively disruptive impacts. Most importantly, advisors said, there is much we can do to respond to climate change, and the sooner we respond, the better off we will be.

GUN-VIOLENCE RESEARCH

17 January. In letters to the U.S. President and two congressional representatives, the AAAS CEO applauded a presidential directive

AAAS and its partners, Brodeur Consulting and Climate Nexus, received funding for the “What We Know” climate-change communication project. World-renowned scientists Mario Molina, James McCarthy, and Diana Wall were tapped to head a scientific advisory panel. Visit online at whatweknow.aaas.org.

to science agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to study the causes of gun violence and how best to prevent it. The President's plan called on Congress to allocate \$10 million to support gun-violence research through the CDC. A proposed Firearm Safety and Public Health Research Act, supported by Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney (D-New York) and Ed Markey (D-Massachusetts), would end a long-standing freeze on gun-violence research. Also in 2013, a committee, chaired by the AAAS CEO and convened by the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council, set forth key research priorities for understanding the public health aspects of gun-related violence.

SAFE, RESPONSIBLE SCIENCE

April 17. AAAS sent comments, in support of national security goals, to help officials fine-tune the U.S. Government Policy for Institutional Oversight of Life Sciences Dual-Use Research of Concern. AAAS input focused on ensuring that “dual-use” research stays out of the wrong hands, while at the same time supporting the responsible exchange of scientific information. Oversight is essential, AAAS said, but it should avoid hindering studies of infectious diseases or other efforts to improve human welfare.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

17 December. An op-ed on the SciDev.Net website, authored by three members of the AAAS Scientific Responsibility, Human Rights, and Law Program, called on scientists and engineers to volunteer their time and talents to human rights efforts. The piece commended the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which received a Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to eliminate cheap, easily produced and deadly chemical weapons. It also urged researchers to become involved with groups such as the AAAS On-call Scientists. The op-ed article by Mark S. Frankel, Jessica Wyndham, and Theresa Harris further called for institutional mechanisms to reward scientists and engineers who take part in volunteer efforts that benefit society.

SCIENTISTS IN SOCIETY

7 May. “To remain competitive, America must build its science and technology workforce for the future,” the AAAS CEO wrote in a letter supporting a plan that would have named unpaid, honorary U.S. Science Laureates. “Inspiring young people to enter science and engineering fields will require changing the mind-set of American culture. Charismatic, diverse scientist-citizens can serve as role models for the next generation, helping to convey the excitement of discovery and the value of empowering all students through a high-quality science education.” The U.S. Science Laureates Act was introduced by a bipartisan team, including Representatives Zoe Lofgren (D-California) and Lamar Smith (R-Texas), as well as Senators Mazie Hirono (D-Hawaii) and Roger Wicker (R-Mississippi).

30 May. In 1974, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) set forth a Recommendation on the Status of Scientific Researchers that called on member states to recognize the societal value of scientists, engineers, and their work. AAAS in 2013 commented on proposed revisions to those recommendations. Specifically, the association called for updates to reflect the impacts of the “digital revolution” on the scientific enterprise, as well as continuing respect for the principles of both scientific freedom and responsibility.

TRAVEL TO SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES

26 February. With a dozen other scientific organizations, AAAS alerted U.S. policymakers to the high value of federal participation in scientific and technical conferences. In a jointly signed letter, AAAS acknowledged the need to carefully review public costs associated with sending scientists to meetings. AAAS emphasized, however, that conferences help to promote the speedy exchange of scientific information across disciplines. Conferences also provide essential presentation opportunities for students, AAAS wrote.