

PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON KEY ISSUES

The importance of federal R&D investments, unwarranted investigations of climate scientists and the need for more diversity within the scientific community were the focus of public statements by AAAS in 2011. Through op-ed articles, letters to policymakers and speaking appearances, AAAS also tackled threats to the teaching of evolution, plus other science-society issues such as human embryonic stem cell research, science communication and nuclear proliferation.



GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

1 June. AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner sent a letter to the Los Alamitos Unified School District, expressing concern about plans to treat climate change as a “controversial issue” in advanced placement environmental science classes.

28 June. A statement of the AAAS Board of Directors decried personal attacks on climate scientists. The Board noted that accounts of harassment, death threats and legal challenges had created a hostile environment, inhibiting the free exchange of scientific findings and ideas. The statement was widely reported by the news media.

INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

7 March. At a time when U.S. President Barack Obama has called for the next “Sputnik moment,” universities should reward faculty members for engaging a broader student population in science, thereby promoting diverse new ideas, the AAAS CEO wrote in a commentary article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

27 May. Stimulating innovation—a critical driver of economic growth and national well-being—will require new strategies to encourage transformative research. In a *Science* editorial, the AAAS CEO proposed more initiatives such as the Pioneer Awards of the U.S. National Institutes of Health or the U.S. Department of Energy’s ARPA-E program, which

set aside funds for frontiers-expanding research. Fostering innovation also will mean increasing the number of young scientists and the diversity of the research community as well as new evaluation and reward mechanisms, he said.

23 June. An essay on the popular “Convergence” blog at Wired.com—timed to the opening of the 7th World Conference of Science Journalists in Doha, Qatar—affirmed the role of a free press in supporting scientific progress. “Any region hoping to be recognized for innovation needs an independent press corps that is able to seek out truth, without interference, while providing a conduit for exchange between science and the rest of society,” the AAAS CEO wrote with co-author Mohamed H.A. Hassan, co-chair of the InterAcademy Panel.

SCIENCE EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

2 March. “There is virtually no scientific controversy among the overwhelming majority of researchers on the core facts of global warming and evolution,” the AAAS CEO wrote in a letter to two Tennessee policymakers. The letter was a response to HB 368, an anti-evolution bill.

25 March. AAAS sent a letter commending the efforts of Senator Al Franken (D-New Mexico) to advance science, technology, engineering and mathematics education (STEM) by rewarding high-quality teachers through the STEM Master Teacher Corps Act of 2011.

5 April. In a letter to representatives of the Tennessee Legislature, AAAS asked them to reject HB 368 and instead support a rigorous scientific education curriculum.

25 August. “Science enrichment opportunities are an important component of science education, and they are everywhere, for young and old alike,” the AAAS CEO wrote in an op-ed related to the 2012 AAAS Annual Meeting in Vancouver. The piece in the *Vancouver Sun*, co-authored with Tracy Ross of the Canadian Association of Science Centres, affirmed the importance of informal science learning.

THE SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE

16 February. With U.S. policymakers facing intense pressure to cut the national deficit, AAAS wrote to the Speaker of

the U.S. House of Representatives as well as the House Minority Leader in support of federal R&D funding. Deep cuts to R&D budgets would be detrimental to America’s scientific enterprise and productivity, AAAS cautioned.

24 February. As the federal appropriations process began, AAAS wrote to Senators Harry Reid (D-Nevada) and Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky)—the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, respectively—urging them to sustain federal R&D funding.

5 July. In a letter to Richard M. Thomas, associate general counsel for the U.S. Office of Government Ethics, AAAS supported a proposed rule that would allow federal scientists to participate in professional societies.

11 July. AAAS urged policymakers to preserve support for “a balanced portfolio of scientific and technological discovery and innovation that has fueled American economic growth and rising standards of living for decades.” The association’s letter to the U.S. Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction also was signed by representatives of nearly 70 other science and engineering societies and universities.

13 July. Three AAAS senior managers sent a letter on the revised merit review criteria put forward from the National Science Board’s Task Force on Merit Review.

28 July. AAAS hailed a ruling that allowed continued federal funding of embryonic stem cell research. U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth dismissed a lawsuit challenging federal funding of embryonic stem cell research, deferring to a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals that the research did not violate federal law. “Embryonic stem cell research is an extremely promising approach to developing more effective diagnostics and treatments for devastating conditions such as diabetes, spinal cord injuries and Parkinson’s disease,” the AAAS CEO wrote. He urged Congress to pass the Stem Cell Research Advancement Act. Lamberth’s decision, and the AAAS reaction to it, received extensive news coverage,



including articles by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Politico*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Agence France Press*.

1 August. AAAS cautioned that a hard-fought agreement to raise the U.S. debt ceiling and reduce spending could imperil federal research investments that are essential to job creation and economic growth. Joanne Carney, director of the AAAS Office of Government Relations, warned that discretionary spending caps, approved by Congress and signed by the President, “could result in a real decrease in R&D investment for the foreseeable future.”

10 August. In a letter to the Administration of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), AAAS applauded the release of a revised Scientific Integrity Policy.

30 August. AAAS, among many other organizations, signed onto a letter informing members of Congress of the value of R&D. “Innovative science protects public safety and national security, and supports our economic prosperity,” the letter noted. “Investing in critical science research now will create jobs and reinforce the American economy.”

26 October. In a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, AAAS commented on new rules related to the protection of human research subjects.

8 November. AAAS contacted the appropriations leaders in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to express grave concerns regarding a House proposal to slash the Office of Science and Technology Policy budget by 50%.

11 November. “When resources are constrained, it is essential that they be used effectively and efficiently to avoid losing scientific momentum and to ensure that society will benefit maximally from science and technology’s potential,” the AAAS CEO wrote in an editorial in *Science*. He proposed steps such as harmonizing funding and reporting policies across granting agencies to reduce wasted administrative efforts and increase returns on federal R&D investments.

20 December. The association expressed concerns about the Grant Reform and New Transparency Act of 2011. Peer-reviewers should remain anonymous to ensure fully candid evaluations, the CEO wrote.



AAAS administered the 2011 L’Oreal Fellowships for Women in Science competition. Here, AAAS Education and Human Resources Director Shirley Malcom (center) is flanked (left to right) by award winners R. Blythe Towal, Tijana Ivanovic, Sasha Devore, Karlin Bark and Trisha Andrew.

SCIENCE AND SECURITY

7 February. AAAS teamed up with three other societies to comment on “export control” rules that relate to public safety and security but also affect research and science publishing. To keep pace with rapid technological change, AAAS suggested continuously updating lists of research areas that are subject to controls.

4 March. Noting that new uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing technologies can pose safety, environmental and proliferation risks, AAAS supported the American Physical Society’s petition to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission to strengthen key application procedures affecting researchers.

WOMEN IN SCIENCE

8 April. “Empowering women as scientists and engineers, supporting girls’ education in science, and valuing women as builders of economic development all contribute to gender equality,” AAAS Education and Human Resources Director Shirley Malcom wrote in an editorial in *Science*. The piece, co-authored with Kerri-Ann Jones, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs, reported on the 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations, which expanded its interests to encompass science- and technology-related concerns.