



April 21, 2015

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

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

The undersigned member organizations of the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) hope to continue working with you to produce the strongest possible legislation to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act, incorporating the spirit and commitment of the original act and setting forth a robust vision of our nation's global leadership in science and technology. We also hope that you will adhere as closely as possible to the attached "Guiding Principles" presented in 2013 to the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee by a broad coalition of scientific societies, institutions of higher education, and private-sector businesses.

We are very concerned with Title I, pertaining to the National Science Foundation (NSF), of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806) introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on April 15, 2015. While H.R. 1806 addresses some concerns raised by the scientific community last year in the FIRST Act (H.R. 4186, 113th Congress), major issues remain that will negatively affect NSF and the scientific community that relies on NSF. H.R. 1806 includes specific budget authorization levels for each of the individual directorates at NSF, as was the case in last year's FIRST Act. We object to this approach and also to the committee's decision to significantly reduce funding levels for two specific directorates: Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) and Geosciences (GEO). This approach runs contrary to the Guiding Principles, which call on the committee to "make a strong statement that the United States sees funding across all disciplines of basic scientific research as a top national priority" and to avoid offsets for any funding increases that could force "significant and potentially detrimental tradeoffs between one field of science and another."

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) is an alliance of over 140 professional organizations, universities, and businesses advocating support for the National Science Foundation.

During the 16 years since Congress last authorized funding by directorate, NSF has adopted highly regarded long-range prioritization policies for determining budget priorities; these include formulating decadal reports, convening expert workshops, and continuously gathering input from the science community. Setting authorization levels according to directorate will reduce the flexibility NSF requires to take advantage of unanticipated discoveries and insights, which are coming ever more rapidly in the modern age. For the United States to remain globally competitive, it is essential that Congress continue to provide NSF the ability to fund grant proposals that advance knowledge in promising scientific areas, whether within or across fields, including the physical, mathematical, natural, social and behavioral sciences, engineering and computer sciences. This broad-based approach has driven American pre-eminence in innovation for decades and will continue to serve us well long into the future.

We deeply appreciate our relationship with the members and staff of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. We believe by working together in the spirit of the original America COMPETES legislation we can help produce a bipartisan reauthorization bill that is supported not only by the members of the committee, but by the scientific and higher education communities as well. We stand ready to work with you to achieve that goal.