



May 11, 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:

On behalf of the Biophysical Society, I am writing to express our opposition to the America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806). Recognizing that science and technology are vital to our country's economy, the health of our citizens, and our quality of life, the original America Competes Act set forth a robust vision for U.S. leadership in science and technology. We are very concerned that provisions included in H.R. 1806, passed by your committee on April 23, do not support this vision. We ask that the committee consider making revisions prior to reporting the bill to the House floor.

Specifically, we are very concerned with Title I, pertaining to the National Science Foundation (NSF), of H.R. 1806. While H.R. 1806 addresses some concerns raised in the scientific community last year by the FIRST Act (H.R. 4186, 113th Congress), major issues remain that will negatively affect NSF and the scientific community that relies on NSF. While we agree with the committee's intent to make sure NSF funds are used as effectively as possible, we believe the best way to do that is to allow NSF the flexibility to direct resources to areas where the greatest scientific opportunity lies at that particular time. H.R. 1806 includes specific budget authorization levels for each of the individual directorates at NSF which would work directly against this flexibility. The funding by directorate would also decrease NSF's ability to fund interdisciplinary work, which the COMPETES Act identifies as a policy objective in Section 103 (1) (A), and to take advantage of

OFFICERS

President
Edward Egelman
University of Virginia

President-Elect
Suzanne Scarlata
Stony Brook University

Past-President
Dorothy Beckett
*University of Maryland,
College Park*

Secretary
Lukas Tamm
University of Virginia

Treasurer
Paul Axelsen
University of Pennsylvania

Executive Officer
Rosalba Kampman
Biophysical Society, Rockville

COUNCIL

Olga Boudker
Ruth Heidelberg
Kalina Hristova
Juliette Lecomte
Amy Lee
Robert Nakamoto
Gabriela Popescu
Joseph D. Puglisi
Michael Pusch
Erin Sheets
Antoine van Oijen
Bonnie Wallace

BIOPHYSICAL JOURNAL

Editor-in-Chief
Leslie Loew

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Awards

H. Jane Dyson

Early Careers

Prithwish Pal

Education

Gina MacDonald

Finance

Paul Axelsen

International Relations

Felix Goñi

Member Services

Lukas Tamm

Membership

Erin Sheets

Minority Affairs

Sandy Ross

Nominating

Joseph D. Puglisi

Professional Opportunities

for Women (CPOW)

Rajini Rao

Public Affairs

Edward Egelman

Publications

Olaf Anderson

Thematic Meetings

Richard Aldrich

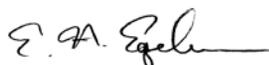
unanticipated discoveries. We recommend that you remove the specific allocations to divisions to ensure that NSF has the flexibility to take advantage of the most promising research opportunities.

In regards to the section of the bill that requires NSF to certify that every grant is in the national interest, we appreciate that you heard the community's concerns and added "promotion of the progress of science in the United States" as part of the definition of research in the national interest in Section 106 (b) (2) (G). We do remain concerned that providing a written justification for each grant may add an unnecessary burden and a level of bureaucracy that detract from the work of NSF. NSF has already committed to providing lay versions of abstracts offering the public a better understanding of a research project's intent, which will satisfy the objective of this section.

The Society is also concerned about overall funding levels authorized by the bill. We recognize with increasing disquiet that the very tight limits on domestic discretionary spending imposed by the Budget Control Act make it very difficult to provide the investments in research that are needed to advance the nation's innovative capacity and global competitiveness. We are disappointed in the overall level of investments in research proposed by this bill, especially for FY 2017, when no increases are accounted for. This is in direct conflict with the recognition in the bill that predictable and sustained funding are necessary for a successful research enterprise.

We do appreciate all the thought and hard work you and the members of the House Science and Technology committee have put into advancing the U.S. research enterprise. We hope to work with you to ensure that the reauthorization makes sure that the enterprise can be as strong as possible moving forward.

Sincerely,



Edward Egelman, President

[Redacted content]