



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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American Psychological Association Statement on HR 1806 (COMPETES Act)

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The American Psychological Association -- the world's largest organization of psychologists with over 130,000 members and affiliates -- stands in firm opposition to the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806), introduced by majority members of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee on April 15, 2015.

Contrary to previous COMPETES legislation, which set authorizing guidelines for the National Science Foundation's (NSF's) overall research funding level, Title 1 of H.R. 1806 authorizes NSF's research directorates individually. In doing so, sponsors of the bill slash authorization levels in both Fiscal Year 2016 and Fiscal Year 2017 for NSF's smallest directorate, the Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE), by almost 45% from its currently funded level.

As a nation, we cannot afford to roll back support for science -- particularly the sciences that ask and address questions critical to understanding human behavior and societal problems. Of the 212 Nobel Prize winners in science funded by NSF since 1951, 50 (almost a quarter of the total) were recipients of SBE grant funding. Every winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences since 1998 has been an NSF grantee. Psychological scientists with NSF research funding address our most serious national challenges in the areas of public safety, national security, health, and education -- with the highest levels of methodological rigor and potential impact.

Guiding Principles for the America COMPETES Act Reauthorization, endorsed by over 130 scientific societies, colleges, universities, and private industry in 2013, strongly avows that "to ensure our national competitiveness, we need to maintain a strong foundation of basic research across all scientific disciplines, from the physical, mathematical and life sciences, to engineering, to the social, economic, and behavioral sciences."

Rolling back science -- and drastically cutting support for entire disciplines of science in a time when multidisciplinary approaches are critically needed -- imperils the U.S. capacity to remain globally competitive while other nations pour enormous resources into research, leading to an innovation deficit with vast economic and national security implications; renders our attempts to address national challenges "expensive guessing" rather than policy-making based on empirical data; adds to job loss and reduced productivity in states and districts across the country, which otherwise would continue to benefit from the scientific enterprise and resulting technology transfer; and further restricts the pipeline for our future scientific workforce.