

OPENING STATEMENT

The Honorable Mo Brooks (R-AL), Chairman
Subcommittee on Research and Science Education
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

An Overview of the National Science Foundation Budget for Fiscal Year 2013

February 28, 2012

Good morning and welcome. I am pleased to welcome Dr. Suresh and Dr. Bowen to discuss NSF's priorities for fiscal year 2013.

Before I hear from them, I would like to make a few comments concerning the President's proposed FY 2013 budget. From where I sit, the President's FY 2013 budget is an irresponsible pie-in-the-sky wish list that fails to take into account America's deteriorating financial condition and seeks to pay for programs with money America simply does not have.

Let me explain. America faces what may be its greatest financial threat in its history. In FY 2011, America's revenues were \$2.3 trillion and our spending was \$3.6 trillion, yielding a \$1.3 trillion deficit. Stated differently, 36 cents of every dollar spent by America in FY 2011 was borrowed money. Under the President's guidance, America has, for the first time ever, run three consecutive trillion dollar plus deficits. Last November, America's accumulated debt blew through the \$15 trillion mark. Sometime this year, America's accumulated debt will blow through the \$16 trillion mark.

Now, if you are like most folks, it is hard to grasp numbers that are in the trillions. Let me simplify the trillions for a moment. Imagine a family that has not been paying attention to its finances and is starting to feel insecure about where they are. The mom and dad sit down at the dinner table and go over their finances for the past three years. They tally up their average income and discover they have been earning \$50,000 per year for three years. They feel pretty good about that. Then they get to the expense side of the ledger. They add up their bills and expenses and discover that they have averaged spending \$80,000 per year for three years. Stated differently, they have been losing \$30,000 per year for each of three years.

This \$30,000 per year annual deficit would cause most families to shudder. They would worry about whether their house will be foreclosed on or their cars repossessed. They would worry about whether they can avoid bankruptcy. As that husband and wife struggle with where to cut spending or whether one of them can get another job or work overtime, the wife picks up the VISA bill. She opens it. It is a bill for \$320,000! Now imagine how overwhelmed that couple must feel. How hopeless the situation may seem.

Well, those numbers -- \$50,000/year in income, \$80,000 in expenses, and \$320,000 in accumulated debt -- mirror the ratios of America's \$2.3 trillion income, \$3.6 trillion in expenses and \$15 trillion in debt. All America is is one very large family of 311 million citizens. The only substantive difference between the hypothetical family I just gave you and America is one of size. Yet the impact of an American insolvency and bankruptcy will have much greater catastrophic effects on all American citizens, which brings me to the President's proposed FY

2013 budget. It does absolutely nothing to alleviate that threat or minimize the risk of an American insolvency or bankruptcy. Rather than cutting spending, the President proposes to increase spending by over \$200 billion, to \$3.8 trillion, or nearly a quarter of our gross domestic product (23.3 percent).

Under this President's budget, America's gross national debt will increase from \$15 trillion today to \$26 trillion ten years from now, and this accumulated debt includes taking into account the President's proposal for the largest tax increase in U.S. history. The President's FY 2013 budget is not sustainable. It is not responsible. It is more of the same. It places America's future at grave risk. All of which brings us to today's hearing. America must figure out a way to better prioritize and leverage our precious and limited federal dollars.

Today, we will be examining the President's FY 2013 budget request for NSF, which totals \$7.4 billion, an increase of \$340 million, or 4.8 percent, over the FY 2012 estimate. While my colleagues and I may disagree on the best priorities for federal research dollars, I am sure that we can all agree that support for basic research is important and essential to our economy. Basic research is an investment in America's future. It is a productive, "job creator". The fruits of that research create jobs and opportunities that often-times change our lives, but even this important endeavor must be undertaken in a fiscally responsible way in our current economic environment.

Through what many consider the gold-standard of merit-review processes, the National Science Foundation has played a vital role in funding basic research crucial to the economic security and international competitiveness of the United States for over 60 years now. As most in this room know, NSF is the primary source of federal government support for non-health-related research and development at America's colleges and universities.

The Administration's budget request for NSF focuses on fostering the development of a clean energy economy; supporting future job creation through advanced manufacturing and emerging technologies; protecting critical infrastructure; promoting multidisciplinary research in new materials, wireless communications, cyber infrastructure and robotics; developing the next generation of scientific leaders through support for graduate fellowships and early career faculty; and advancing evidence-based reforms in science and mathematics education.

While a nearly five percent increase for NSF in FY13 shows stronger fiscal constraint than the FY 2012 request at 13 percent, I remain concerned that our federal agencies still are not doing enough to encourage austerity and properly prioritize scarcer federal funds. It is the job of every Member on this Subcommittee to ensure that all federal investments serve to strengthen the economy. It is my hope that together we can work to achieve this goal, while at the same time exhibiting fiscal accountability.

NSF has a long and proven track record, one in which we are all proud, and I have every reason to believe NSF will continue this good work with whatever budgets are forthcoming from Congress.

I look forward to hearing the testimony to be presented today, and thank both of you gentlemen for taking the time out of your very busy schedules to join us.