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For Immediate Release

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FIRST Act Introduced by House Science Committee Majority Fails Nation's Scientific and Technology Enterprise

The American Physical Society (APS) urges members of the House of Representatives to vote against the recently introduced FIRST Act. APS believes the legislation in its current form threatens to do irreparable harm to the nation's scientific and technology enterprise rather than strengthening it.

The FIRST Act, which aspires to stimulate innovation through scientific research and STEM education, pales in comparison to its original precursor, the 2007 America COMPETES Act, which the House and Senate passed with overwhelming bipartisan support.

A year ago, the science, business and higher education communities jointly endorsed a set of [guidelines](#) for COMPETES reauthorization. Unfortunately, the FIRST Act, as currently written, fails to address many of the key recommendations.

The FIRST Act also calls for crippling cuts to social, behavioral and economic (SBE) research to the detriment of both the public and private sector. The products of SBE research provide policymakers with the necessary tools for optimizing the public benefits of scientific discoveries. The outcomes of such research also provide the private sector with insights into human behavior, allowing companies to compete more effectively in the global arena and maximize their profits.

Even more significantly, the FIRST Act would reduce the quality of the nation's scientific output by placing restrictions on citations of scientific papers, thereby hampering the peer review process upon which the research enterprise relies. And by making it difficult for the National Science Foundation (NSF) to fund research projects that extend beyond five years, the legislation would deal a blow to NSF's support of high energy physics, nuclear physics and astronomy, fields in which projects more often than not extend beyond a decade.

Finally, the FIRST Act fails to set funding targets for NSF and the National Institutes of Standards and Technology that even keep pace with inflation. The reduction in scientific capacity would come at a time when our competitors abroad are expanding their science and technology reach. The legislation, in effect, would set our nation on a course of slower economic growth and job creation, and by so doing, it would complicate our debt and deficit problems rather than solve them.

Absent substantial revisions, APS strongly opposes the FIRST Act and urges Congress to do the same.

Link to the press release: <http://www.aps.org/about/pressreleases/first-act.cfm>.