



The Honorable Larry Buschon, Chairman
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
1005 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

12 March 2014

Dear Chairmen Buschon and Smith:

On behalf of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and its over 62,000 members – Earth and space scientists striving to advance scientific research for the benefit of humanity, I urge you recognize that investment in Earth and space science research is essential to the well-being and prosperity of the United States and its citizens.

Throughout its history the United States has called upon Earth and space scientists to address challenges facing society. The America COMPETES Acts of 2007 and 2010 provided the necessary foundation to maintain the United States' worldwide leadership in Earth and space science funding and research, and now is the time for Congress to build on those efforts for the next several years.

Much of the Earth and space scientific community relies on the National Science Foundation (NSF) and its Geosciences Directorate (GEO) for financial support. GEO-supported researchers investigate how the atmosphere, oceans, land, water, and poles respond to and influence changes in the Earth's system, as well as how the sun and other space-based phenomena affect the environment and humanity across multiple scales.

AGU writes to express its serious concerns with H.R. 4186, the Frontiers in Research, Science, Technology (FIRST) Act of 2014. The bill falls short and sets unnecessary precedents in several respects:

- GEO-supported research provides invaluable knowledge on protecting American lives and infrastructure from tornados, hurricanes, and other natural hazards, sustaining biological diversity and ocean resources, conserving soil and water for agricultural productivity, and finding and maintaining adequate supplies of minerals and natural resources. AGU believes

H.R. 4186 disregards the societal benefits of Earth and space science research by critically underfunding GEO to levels lower than those received during sequestration.

- The specific allocations for NSF in the 2010 America COMPETES Act concerned: research and related activities, education and human resources, major research equipment and facilities construction, agency operations and award management, the Office of the National Science Board, and the Office the Inspector General. H.R. 4186 ignores this precedent and instead sets specific allocations for NSF's directorates, thereby placing Congress as the authority for prioritizing U.S. scientific innovation rather than the National Science Board and NSF.
- Basic science research has seen minimal growth in recent years. Steady and sustained growth over inflation is essential across all sciences. Congress must recommit to basic research and innovation to foster transformative science. H.R. 4186 sets forth funding levels for NSF that provide no real growth, further erode U.S. scientific infrastructure, and implement potentially detrimental tradeoffs between scientific fields.

For these reasons, AGU opposes H.R. 4168 in its current form. However, AGU remains committed to working with the House Science Committee to pass a reauthorization bill for the federal science agencies that aligns with the objectives of the America COMPETES Acts of 2007 and 2010 and the needs and goals of the U.S. scientific enterprise.

America's economic competitiveness, public safety, and national security depend on our commitment to invest in the Earth and space sciences. AGU urges you to modify the FIRST Act of 2014 and set forth a vision commensurate with the COMPETES Act to spur science innovation and growth and recognize the vital role of the Earth and space sciences in achieving this mandate.

Sincerely,



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