



# FASEB

Federation of American Societies  
for Experimental Biology

*Representing Over 120,000 Researchers*

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April 7, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In recent years, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) and other science and engineering organizations have looked to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology to provide the support necessary for this nation's research enterprise to remain preeminent in the face of growing international competition. Unfortunately, the FIRST Act (H.R. 4186, Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science and Technology Act of 2014) falls short of this important objective. Rather than advance our capabilities in the critical areas of science and technology, it underfunds our research enterprise and adds unnecessary administrative processes that will hamper progress in science and technology. We respectfully urge the Committee to look for ways to improve the current version of this bill.

In the past, the Committee's legislation provided a vision and long-range plan for the science agencies; however, the FIRST Act covers only the current year and the following year. Research is a complex process requiring the development of detailed experimental designs, coordination of research teams, creation of new instrumentation, and training of scientists and engineers. To maximize the investment of resources and talent by individuals and research organizations, the Committee needs to provide leadership with a multi-year perspective.

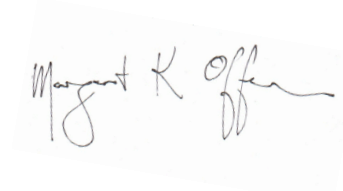
After years of lost purchasing power, however, the FIRST Act calls for only a 1.5 percent increase in funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in fiscal year 2015. Citing the growing investment that other nations are making in R&D, the FIRST Act fails to provide a solution to the threat that it identifies. The proposed funding level for NSF falls far short of what this nation should do to support its research enterprise.

The FIRST Act acknowledges the critical importance of basic research. It is disappointing, therefore, that it will limit future progress in basic research by forcing NSF to fund only those projects that fit into six categories of potential application. Since many basic studies of fundamental processes do not have a known application when they are undertaken, the Foundation cannot honestly satisfy this requirement without limiting its portfolio to a narrow set of projects with predictable outcomes.

While we appreciate that the current language is less restrictive than earlier proposals, the change is not sufficient to remove the threat to funding for basic research. Private funds can be used for applied research. But only the public sector, acting in the interest of the entire nation, is able to fund the sustained effort in basic research that will keep the U.S. on the forefront of science and technology. Our investment in research must encourage creativity and exploration. Researchers must be free to pursue the critical scientific questions and not be constrained to narrow areas with immediately known applications.

In the interest of the future health and well-being of our citizens, FASEB, its 120,000 members, and 26 member societies urge the Committee to develop bold legislation with a longer time span, greater investment in research, and fewer new regulatory constraints. Such a bill, in the mode of the bi-partisan America COMPETES legislation, would keep the nation's research enterprise strong in the face of growing international competition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Margaret K Offermann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Margaret "Kenny" Offermann, MD, PhD  
President  
FASEB

cc: Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member