BRIAN BABIN, D.D.S., Texas
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
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October 27th, 2026

Mr. Brian Stone
Chief of Staff, Performing the Duties of the Director
National Science Foundation
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Stone:

I write to you to express my concern about the state of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Trump Administration has made the most sweeping set of changes to NSF in the agency's 76-year history. Change itself is not a problem; in fact, it is necessary. But those changes should always be in the service of the security and prosperity of the American people. In this case, the changes at NSF have caused harm to American science by cutting funding for fundamental research, terminating research awards in OMB Director Russell Vought's disfavored scientific disciplines, destabilizing colleges and universities, undercutting the careers of young American scientists, and marginalizing the role of merit review within NSF's own internal processes. Furthermore, NSF has violated Congress' power of the purse and the rightful separation of powers in our constitutional system by refusing to spend $1.4 billion in congressionally appropriated funds last fiscal year (FY), or nearly 20 percent of the agency's research budget. Contrary to the recent lofty – and unearned – rhetoric from NSF and the White House, NSF's effectiveness has been diminished by these, at best, quasi-legal actions.

NSF was established in 1950 by Congress to "promote the progress of science, advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare, and secure the national defense" in war and peacetime.[1] Dr. Vannevar Bush's report, *Science: The Endless Frontier*, and the ultimate debates it sparked in Congress with Senator Harley Kilgore, served as the foundational vision for NSF and its mission.[2] These facts have been noted frequently since July 2026, when White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director Michael Kratsios published a report detailing his rival perspective entitled *Science: A New Golden Age*.[3] Last month, NSF adopted Mr. Kratsios's report as an authoritative policy document for implementing decisions, despite the absence of any congressional endorsement of these plans through either the authorization or

[1] https://nsf-gov-resources.nsf.gov/2023-04/NSF_act_1950_legislation.pdf
[2] https://www.nsf.gov/about/history
[3] https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Science-A-New-Golden-Age.pdf

appropriations process.[4] Through the massive changes Mr. Kratsios has directed, NSF has eroded its own capacity to carry out vital research to address our nation's priorities.

I have previously expressed to you my concern about NSF's chaotic grant cancellations,[5] and those concerns have only increased due to NSF's confession in court that the terminations were based purely on a politicized keyword search.[6] I have also shared my concerns about changes to the NSF's Graduate Research Fellowship Program,[7] its attempted dismantling of the National Center for Atmospheric Research,[8] the firing of its entire National Science Board by President Trump,[9] its overt blacklisting of politically disfavored universities,[10] its plan to undermine its own expert review process,[11,12] its announcement to illegally dismantle the Ocean Observatories Initiative,[13] and – last but not least – its alignment with the Administration's *Golden Age* vision.[14] NSF has done little to respond to these criticisms except to roll out ever more extreme changes with shallow assurances that everything will be fine.

In a staff briefing on July 22nd, Science Committee staff asked NSF for an update on the agency's intentions to spend congressionally appropriated FY 2026 funds. The agency told Committee Staff that it was behind schedule because of late appropriations, but that it had every intention of catching up on award-making by the end of the fiscal year. This briefing took place mere hours after Mr. Kratsios testified before the Committee and declined to disclose the Administration's plan to use NSF's research budget to fund "Grand Research Challenges," (as the press called it in July)[15] or "Frontier Initiatives" (as OSTP and NSF labeled it months later).[16] Subsequent reporting conveyed that NSF did not intend to distribute its full research budget to researchers across the country, but rather intended to divert a significant portion of its funding to advance unknown Trump Administration priorities.[17] For months, the most reliable source of information

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[4] https://www.nsf.gov/news/nsf-leadership-new-golden-age-science
[5] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/science-committee-members-demand-answers-from-nsf-on-award-terminations-and-reckless-policy-actions and https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/science-committee-to-host-event-today-highlighting-research-grants-canceled-by-trump-administration
[6] https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/2026/07/21/california-research-grants-terminated-keywords-lawsuit/8f49f4ba-8540-11f1-9cec-0fb26676f07e_story.html
[7] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-members-lofgren-and-stevens-demand-nsf-reverse-cruel-changes-to-the-2025-graduate-research-fellowship-program
[8] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-lofgren-condemns-trump-administrations-threat-to-dismantle-the-national-center-for-atmospheric-research
[9] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-democrats-condemn-termination-of-national-science-board-members
[10] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/democratic-members-slam-nsf-for-covert-blacklisting-of-universities
[11] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-lofgren-slams-trump-administration-for-plan-to-politicize-research-funding-process-undermine-expert-review
[12] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-lofgren-demands-reversal-of-changes-made-to-nsf-award-policies
[13] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases?PageNum_rs=1& and https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/science-natural-resources-committee-democrats-demand-trump-administration-cease-illegal-and-expensive-scheme-to-dismantle-nsf-ocean-observation-system
[14] https://democrats-science.house.gov/news/press-releases/ranking-member-lofgren-condemns-radical-changes-to-nsf-initiatives
[15] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-02135-x
[16] https://nsf-gov-resources.nsf.gov/files/Statement-NSF-Leadership-Golden-Age-Science.pdf
[17] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-02135-x

regarding NSF's intentions for its research budget was the press, rather than the agency and the administration officials testifying about it before Congress.

According to the *New York Times,* NSF "withheld $1.4 billion that Congress had intended for research" in FY 2026, or nearly *20 percent of the agency's research budget.*[18] With the exception of the Directorate for Technology, Innovation, and Partnerships, NSF Directorate obligations were cut approximately 20-60 percent compared to average spending in FY 2021-2024.[19] These actions directly contradict the will of Congress, which stated in a report accompanying the FY 2026 appropriations bill for NSF that "no Directorate shall receive more than a 5 percent reduction relative to the FY 2024 enacted level."[20] While NSF has occasionally carried over large sums of appropriated funds in past years, these have typically been for situations such as multi-year outlays for major construction projects.[21] FY 2026 was different. NSF not only underspent in most core Directorates but also neglected programs that received explicit appropriations from Congress,[22] and for which consistent, decades-long support is established within the congressional record.[23]

The Committee has yet to receive an explanation from NSF about why it chose not to spend nearly 20 percent of its congressionally appropriated research budget. But the amount of money withheld from FY 2026 award-making is broadly similar to the amount of funding that will reportedly be diverted to the OSTP-backed frontier initiatives agenda.[24] The Committee has already obtained evidence that the Trump White House has routinely influenced decision-making at NSF in unprecedented ways. The damage to the U.S. research enterprise from a $1.4 billion cut in federal funding is significant.

Mr. Stone, I take no pleasure in expressing these criticisms. I believe the staff at your agency share my goals: to promote scientific innovation and protect the health, prosperity, and security of the American people. But today, NSF appears to be directed by White House political appointees, substituting their preferences for its statutory mission. U.S. science is at a critical point as we struggle to maintain our global leadership. If NSF continues to neglect its mission, we could lose that leadership altogether.

I appreciate that our communication has been regular, if not always transparent. But as NSF prepares for even greater uncertainty in the aftermath of your decision to retire, I must have far more information regarding the agency's current state of affairs to assess the necessary steps for

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[18] https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/02/us/politics/national-science-foundation-research-funds.html.
[19] https://grantwitness.org/nsf/analyses/agency-pulse-nsf-grants
[20] https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy26_cjs_jes.pdf and https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/6938/text
[21] Congressional Research Service, "National Science Foundation (NSF) Obligations, Awards, and Carryover Amounts, FY2018-FY2026." Memorandum to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (Democrats). October 14, 2026.
[22] https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/fy26_cjs_jes.pdf and https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/6938/text
[23] E.g., see Public Law No: 116-102 (2019), Public Law No: 110-69 (2007), Public Law No: 105-255 (1998), Public Law No: 101-589 (1990).
[24] https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-02135-x.

returning it to its proper path. Please respond to the following questions no later than 5:00 PM on Tuesday, November 17th, 2026:

1. Does NSF intend to spend the entire $1.4 billion that was withheld from its FY 2026 research budget in FY 2027 alongside the appropriated funds for FY 2027?

2. How is NSF managing the $1.4 billion that was withheld from its research budget in FY 2026?

    a. What portion of that $1.4 billion in funding has been designated for the new initiatives announced in NSF's September 10th, 2026 memorandum entitled "NSF Leadership in a New Golden Age of Science"?
    b. Please provide a breakdown of the amount of funding that NSF intends to dedicate to each new initiative announced in the September 10th memorandum in FY 2027.
    c. For any portion of the $1.4 billion in funding that has not yet been designated towards a new initiative announced in NSF's September 10th memorandum, how does NSF intend to make decisions regarding its use?

3. What additional organizational changes does NSF plan to implement in order to align its internal structure with the priorities and initiatives expressed in NSF's September 10th memorandum?

4. What additional staffing changes does NSF plan to implement in order to align its personnel and leadership structure with the priorities and initiatives expressed in NSF's September 10th memorandum?

5. As NSF continues to implement its September 10th memorandum and its shift from Divisions to Sections, how will the agency monitor the impacts of its organizational changes upon the distribution of funding within Directorates and communicate those impacts to the public?

6. When did NSF first become aware of OSTP's recent report, *Science: A New Golden Age*, published in July 2026?

    a. Did NSF review a draft of the report before it was published by OSTP?
    b. Did NSF provide comments about the report to OSTP before it was finalized and published?

7. When did NSF leadership decide to withhold $1.4 billion from its FY 2026 research budget rather than awarding the full budget for extramural research? Please disclose the specific date on which NSF senior officials authorized the agency to withhold $1.4 billion from extramural research funding.

8. Did any official at NSF receive any direction, in written or verbal form, from any official at the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) or White House Office of

Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to withhold funds from NSF's research budget in FY 2026 rather than awarding those funds for extramural research?

   a. If so, please provide the following information pertaining to each relevant interaction between officials at NSF and OMB/OSTP:

      i. The date of the interaction;
      ii. The name of the official or officials at NSF who received direction to withhold funds;
      iii. The name of the official or officials at OMB and/or OSTP who provided direction to withhold funds;
      iv. The amount of funds that NSF was directed to withhold from its FY 2026 research budget.

9. On September 10th, 2026, and October 13th, 2026, Committee Staff requested staff briefings from NSF regarding the agency's September 10th, 2026 memorandum and its implementation. NSF has not provided the requested briefings. Please provide a comprehensive briefing to Committee Staff regarding NSF's September 10th, 2026 memorandum no later than Thursday, November 19th, 2026.

10. Please coordinate with Committee Staff to provide regular staff briefings pertaining to NSF's implementation of its September 10th, 2026 memorandum, as well as the funding status of NSF's FY 2027 research budget. The first briefing should take place in January 2027, and staff briefings should thereafter occur on a monthly basis through the end of FY 2027.

Pursuant to Rule X of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology "shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities relating to nonmilitary research and development."[25] The Committee possesses jurisdiction over the National Science Foundation.[26] If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Josh Schneider or Albert Hinman with the Committee's Minority staff at (202) 225-6375. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

[25] 119 First Session House Rules.
[26] *Id.*

CC: Chairman Brian Babin
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology