

OPENING STATEMENT
Ranking Member Don Beyer (D-VA)
of the Subcommittee on Oversight

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Oversight
Subcommittee on Research and Technology
“Examining the Overhead Cost of Research”
May 24, 2017

Thank you Chairwoman Comstock and Chairman LaHood for having this hearing today.

I generally agree with the questions raised by Ranking Member Lipinski about overhead costs on federally funded research. But I also want to emphasize the importance of the National Science Foundation and our other science agencies in spurring innovation, economic growth, and technological advancements in multiple arenas.

As a small business owner, I understand that indirect costs -- or overhead -- are still costs that need to be covered and funded. I cannot run my auto dealerships without electricity for light, heat, and the tools, without accountants to manage our budgets, without IT gurus to maintain the computers that manage every aspect of our inventory and sales processes, and without the mortgages on our buildings. These kinds of overhead costs are just as necessary to run a science lab as they are to operate an automobile dealership.

Of course, we must always strive to improve the management of federal research grants. Of course, we must search for effective and efficient methods to spend and to oversee these funds. But should we drastically cut federal funds to science agencies that lead to innovative technical discoveries, scientific breakthroughs and economic growth, as the Trump Administration has proposed? Absolutely not. These would be foolhardy decisions that would jeopardize our economic competitiveness and our ability to develop important national security technologies and make vital medical and other scientific advancements.

I am deeply concerned about efforts by this Administration to drastically reduce scientific funding to the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, and NSF, and many others. This shortsighted abandonment of our investment in science can only harm our economy, our health, our world leadership, and our ability to innovate in the middle and long term.

The National Science Foundation plays the fundamental, foundational role in funding scientific research in the United States. Sine qua non. The NSF builds our scientific knowledge, improves our security, expands our economy, and helps our nation compete technologically with the world. Each year the NSF provides more than \$7 billion in approximately 12,000 new grant awards to nearly 2,000 institutions. The NSF accounts for nearly one-quarter of all federal research funding for basic science conducted by America's colleges and universities.

I don't think any Member of Congress is opposed to exploring reasonable and responsible opportunities to ensure federal funds are spent as effectively and efficiently as possible. Improvements in financial management are always possible and should be pursued. But let's be fully aware of the unintended consequences of our actions. Let's be certain any changes we make keep the best scientists doing the most important work on the National Science Foundation team. Let's make sure we are not initiating a race to the bottom, with prizes to the lowest bidder doing the least valuable research.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses. I trust we will have a constructive dialogue about the important role the federal government plays in funding scientific research and just how we can make that process as effective and efficient as possible.

Thank you. I yield back.