

**Statement on H.R. 3293, Scientific Research in the National Interest Act**

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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

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I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 3293, the Scientific Research in the National Interest Act.

I oppose H.R. 3293 because I believe that this bill will hurt our Nation's premier basic research agency, lead to less high-reward research, and ultimately, leave America less competitive.

My Republican colleagues have a simple argument for their legislation: shouldn't NSF research be in the national interest? That is a very good question, but one that can easily be answered. My answer is that NSF research is already in the national interest. It has been for over 60 years.

The Federal investment in basic research over the past 60 years has been the primary driver of our Nation's economic growth and innovation. In innumerable ways, our investments in basic research have paid back a wealth of dividends.

And this fact is widely recognized across academia and industry. The National Academies "Rising Above the Gathering Storm" report made this point a decade ago. That panel, chaired by the former head of Lockheed Martin, understood that investment in basic research was fundamentally in the national interest.

When we passed the 2010 COMPETES reauthorization as part of Democrats' innovation agenda, that bill was endorsed by hundreds of business and research organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers. They all understood that investing in basic research is in the national interest.

So what is this bill really all about? Is it really about enhancing our Nation's ability to innovate? No. Sadly, this bill continues the Republican Majority's preoccupation with second guessing America's best and brightest research scientists.

For the past three years, the Science Committee Majority has been engaged in a relentless and pernicious campaign against research grants with silly or odd sounding titles.

Republicans have used that time to carry out unprecedented rifling through of 70 NSF grants reviews. And after all this effort, did they find any evidence of wrongdoing? No, the only thing they found was what they already knew: Each of the research grants had passed NSF's merit-review process with flying colors.

The Majority may not like it and wish the results were different. But those are the facts. Let us be clear – some of the greatest scientific achievements of the past 60 years were the result of funny sounding research, including some research that was ridiculed in Congress as frivolous.

There are scores of examples. One of my favorites is "The Sex Life of the Screwworm," surely one of the silliest sounding titles for research there could possibly be. So silly, in fact, that in the 1970's the grant

was ridiculed as an example of government waste on the Senate Floor. Sounds a lot like what the Majority is doing here today, doesn't it?

It turned out that the screwworm was costing the U.S. cattle industry a small fortune. As a direct result of this silly sounding research, the cattle industry saved approximately \$20 billion in the U.S., and significantly reduced the cost of beef to U.S. consumers.

At its core, this bill is about second guessing our Nation's best and brightest scientists, and the grant making decisions they make. Perhaps this is not surprising, when so many of my Republican colleagues openly question the validity of whole fields of established science, from the social sciences to climate science to evolutionary biology.

Far from adding anything useful to the NSF's review process, H.R. 3293 would add more bureaucracy and paperwork. But my biggest concern about these new requirements is they will push NSF reviewers to fund less high-risk research, which, by its very nature entails the pursuit of scientific understanding without necessarily any particular or known benefit. We know that high-risk research tends to have the highest reward, something that we have seen throughout the history of the NSF.

I'm not alone in this concern. The President's Science Advisor, Dr. John Holdren noted that:

"[H].R. 3293 would create doubt at NSF and in the research community about Congress's real intent in calling into question the adequacy of NSF's gold-standard merit-review process, for applied as well as for basic research. This could easily have a chilling effect on the amount of basic research that scientists propose and that NSF chooses to fund, with detrimental consequences for this Nation's leadership in science, technology, and innovation alike."

Mr. Chair, I choose to stand with the scientists when it comes to science. For that reason, I strongly oppose this legislation. Thank you and I reserve the balance of my time.