



November 14, 2017

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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Schumer and Pelosi,

The undersigned are writing to urge you to forge a bipartisan agreement that raises the Defense and non-Defense Discretionary (NDD) budget caps and provides meaningful funding increases for our nation's science agencies.

Crafting and securing passage of an annual budget that reflects the best interests of America and Americans is undoubtedly one of the most challenging and important responsibilities Congress faces each year. We firmly believe that the 115th Congress cannot fulfill this responsibility unless the sequestration budget caps imposed under the 2011 Budget Control Act are raised.

The counter-strategic impact of the budget caps is nowhere more apparent than in the science arena. The National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy (DOE), Department of the Interior (DOI), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Defense (DOD), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and our nation's other science departments and agencies support the pre-commercial research needed to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, meet Americans' energy needs, pursue homeland and cybersecurity, overcome deadly and costly diseases, preempt threats to our nation's food and antibiotic supplies, and advance other top priority objectives of the American people. Underinvestment places lives, property, our economy, and ultimately our very future as a nation and people at risk.

As it stands, federal investment in research and development (R&D) is at an historic low relative to GDP, steadily declining from nearly 2 percent at the height of the Space Race to 0.79 percent in FY16. The U.S. ranks tenth among developed nations in R&D spending as a percentage of GDP. China is achieving astonishing average annual growth in R&D spending, at 18.3%. This compares to 1.4% across other upper-middle-income countries.

The stakes are alarmingly high. If other nations continue this trajectory while our nation lags behind, we will cede far more than our science leadership: our global economic leadership and with it our level of influence in other key areas of international engagement are also bound to falter.

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Beyond the reasons outlined above, the return on federal R&D – whether measured in quantitative or qualitative terms -- dwarfs our nation's current investment in it. To secure our nation for the future and capture this untapped potential, we request that Congress act promptly to raise the caps and devote additional resources to bolstering federal science funding.

Thank you for considering our views, and for your service to our nation

Sincerely,

Mary Woolley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Research!America

Allyson K. Anderson Book, Executive Director, American Geosciences Institute

Matthew R. Bailey, President, National Association for Biomedical Research

Robert Barsley, Board Chair, Council of Scientific Society Presidents

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Christine McEntee, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer, American Geophysical Union

Alan C. Mix, President, The Oceanography Society

Wendy A. Naus, Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations

Catherine O'Riordan and Gigi Swartz, Interim Co-CEOs, American Institute of Physics

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Marty Saggese, Executive Director, Society for Neuroscience

Keith L. Seitter, Executive Director, American Meteorological Society

Paula Skedsvold, Executive Director, Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences

Crispin B. Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, American Society of Plant Biologists

Jamie Vernon, Executive Director, Sigma Xi

Keith Yamamoto, Chair, Coalition for the Life Sciences