March 22, 2010

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice & Science
Committee on Appropriations
H-310 Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice & Science
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf:

We are writing to thank you for your consistent support for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and to urge you to continue that support in the fiscal year 2011 (FY11) appropriations bill. We ask that you uphold the Administration’s FY11 funding level request of $7.424 billion for the National Science Foundation.

Despite mounting evidence that we are continuing to lose our position as worldwide leaders in science and technology and overwhelming support for the COMPETES Act, funding for the NSF has fallen short of the doubling path established by the America COMPETES Act (P.L. 110-69) in 2007. A renewed commitment to core basic research and educational programs at the NSF is an essential part of meeting the multidisciplinary challenges we face in areas such as energy, health care, and nanotechnology. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, we must make sustained investments in the National Science Foundation.

The NSF funds investigator-initiated, peer-reviewed, competitively selected awards, state-of-the-art tools, instrumentation, facilities, and educational programs. In 2007, an esteemed panel at the National Academies issued an urgent warning that we may be losing our economic edge in science and technology. The panel’s *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report served as a catalyst for Congress and the Administration to pass the America COMPETES Act. The COMPETES Act must be reauthorized for FY11, but the FY10 authorization provided $8.1 billion for the NSF.

The NSF is a key supporter of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education. Now, more than ever, we must invest in our children’s education to develop their talent, ensure their success, and maintain the quality of our workforce and economic strength. The NSF, with its expertise in merit-review awards, is uniquely positioned to contribute to STEM education and directly impact our nation’s competitiveness. We strongly support the educational mission of the NSF, and are troubled that the FY11 request for the education directorate (EHR) of the NSF is significantly lower than the request for the general research directorates, and does not keep pace with inflation.

At the same time, we recognize that the overall increase requested for the NSF comes at a time when other agencies within the CJS Subcommittee may be suffering cuts. Though NSF receives only four percent of the total federal research and development budget, it is the bedrock of our scientific strength and provides the basis for innovation and development throughout our economy. We respectfully request that you continue to support such advances by funding the NSF at $7.424 billion in the FY11 appropriations bill.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,
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