March 19, 2010

The Honorable Peter Visclosky
Chairman
Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
2362 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Visclosky and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

As you begin your work on the Fiscal Year 2011 Energy and Water Appropriations bill, we write to express our strong support for the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Office of Science. In particular, we urge you to support the Administration’s budget request of $5.121 billion for the DOE Office of Science, which represents a 4.4 percent increase over the fiscal year 2010 funding level, and is consistent with the plans of the both the Administration and Congress to double the federal investment in the basic sciences within the next decade.

In recent years, Congress has recognized that science is the foundation for the innovative solutions that will enable us to overcome many of our greatest challenges – from our economic crises and environmental concerns to our dependence on foreign energy and escalating health care costs. To address these challenges and remain globally competitive as a nation, 2 both Democrats and Republicans have supported efforts to double federal funding for basic research in the physical sciences within the next decade as evidenced by the overwhelming bipartisan vote for enactment of the America COMPETES Act in 2007 (P.L. 110-69).

Congress must build on and provide the resources to sustain this investment in fiscal year 2011. The benefits to the U.S. economy and U.S. competitiveness are well known. Economic experts have concluded that science-driven technology has accounted for more than 50 percent of the growth of the U.S. economy during the last half-century. The increased funding requested for the DOE Office of Science will give the economy a boost in the near-term by creating and sustaining good-paying, American jobs in construction, manufacturing, and research. And in the long-term, this investment in the nation’s scientific and research enterprise – both human and physical capital – will increase our capacity to innovate, reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy, enhance our competitive edge in the global economy, and create the jobs of the future.
This kind of technology-based economic growth cannot proceed without additional investment in the kind of basic research and facilities supported by the DOE Office of Science, especially as the nation confronts growing economic and scientific competition from Asia and Europe. The DOE Office of Science is the nation’s primary sponsor of research in the physical sciences, supporting over 40 percent of total federal funding for this research – more than any other federal agency. With adequate funding, the DOE Office of Science will ensure that the U.S. retains its dominance in such key scientific fields as nanotechnology, materials science, biotechnology, and supercomputing. Besides making the nation more innovative and competitive, cutting-edge basic research in these fields is vital to developing the knowledge and advanced energy technologies essential to ensuring the nation’s future energy security.

In addition to supporting critical research, the DOE Office of Science maintains a unique collection of large-scale, specialized user facilities accessed by 25,000 researchers in fiscal year 2010 alone. Nearly half of those users are university faculty and students – many whose research is being supported by other federal agencies – and a significant number will be from U.S. industry (change tense and theme - research not connected to industry). In carrying out their own research activities, other federal science agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) greatly depend upon the DOE Office of Science and its facilities, making it an exceptional and critical component of the federal science portfolio.

For these and many other reasons, we urge you to support the Administration’s fiscal year 2011 budget request of $5.121 billion for the DOE Office of Science. Furthermore, we urge you to focus this funding on mission-related activities and facilities, and to avoid using core DOE research program budgets to fund extraneous projects. With this funding, the DOE Office of Science will attract the best minds, educate the next generation of scientists and engineers, support the construction and operation of modern facilities, and conduct even more of the quality scientific research that will create jobs and ensure that the U.S. retains its competitive edge for many years to come.

Thanks for your consideration. We are cognizant of the difficult budget situation under which your subcommittee is working, and we urge you to contact us if we may be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

Judy Biggert
Rush Holt

Yvette D. Clarke
Lois Capps
Dave Locke
Bill Foster
Ben Murphy
Ron Kind
Bob Fett
Jim Moran
Dunn Woolsey
Jim Russell
Phil Van Hollen
Paul Geist
Grace J. Napolitano
Michael Espy
Barry Crank
Earl Blumenauer
Bill A. Weyman
Calvin B. Maloney