February 11, 2013

President Barack Obama

The Honorable John Boehner  The Honorable Harry Reid
Speaker of the House of Representatives  Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Democratic Leader, House of Representatives  Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Eric Cantor
Majority Leader, House of Representatives

Dear Mr. President and Congressional Leaders:

On behalf of the Task Force on American Innovation, representing a broad and
diverse cross section of companies, universities, and professional societies, we
urge you to stop the pending sequester, which would make short-sighted cuts to
critical scientific research investments and other important federal programs that
are vital to economic growth.

Indeed, the key to solving our country’s fiscal problems is strong and durable
economic growth, not cuts to critical government programs. We cannot achieve
economic growth without strategic investments in scientific research.

Scientific research drives innovation, productivity, job creation, and growth.
Technological advances such as the laser, the Internet and the Web, GPS, and the
large-scale integrated circuit had their origins in long-term research. These
advances were the consequence of federal policies that directly funded long-term
research, provided incentives for private investment in technology development,
and stressed the importance of science and engineering education. Indeed,
economic analyses generally attribute more than half of all economic growth in the
United States since the end of World War II to technological advances.

Today, however, a good part of the world is catching up with our scientific
competence, and in some areas has surpassed it. Nations such as China and India
are pouring resources into developing their research capacities and their human
capital in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.
These investments will help them over the long term to challenge our economic as
well as our military leadership. If we do not continue to advance our research
capacity as well as remedy our nation’s deficiencies in STEM education, we run
the risk of falling behind our competitors.
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We concur with you that it is absolutely necessary that our nation make the difficult decisions required to control annual deficits and stabilize the national debt. However, as Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has indicated, sequestration’s “meat axe” approach to budget cutting would have a detrimental impact on our country. Scientific research would be chopped right alongside other programs, and discoveries and innovations that would create jobs and grow the economy would be delayed or lost entirely.

Funding science and research is a necessary and important investment for a country that seeks to expand its economy. Pulling back on those investments, especially when other nations are ramping up theirs, is short-sighted and will leave our nation less able to sustain the economic growth it needs to help eliminate budget deficits in future years. Moreover, the indiscriminate cuts of sequestration would have a devastating effect on our national security and military readiness, and would also hamper other vital government activities, including FAA operations of the national air transportation system, FBI law enforcement, FDA food inspections, NIH medical research, NASA’s space exploration program and NOAA’s development of new weather satellites.

Thank you in advance for considering our request. We stand ready to help with the hard work ahead.

Sincerely,

Task Force on American Innovation

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