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Task Force on American Innovation Urges
Congress and White House to Close Innovation Deficit

Washington, DC – The Task Force on American Innovation today urged Congress and the White House to resolve their disagreements over budget issues, including the government shutdown, sequestration, and the debt limit, in a way that would close the nation’s innovation deficit. The Task Force, which is an alliance of business, academia, and scientific societies in support of federal basic research, warned that failing to close the innovation deficit – the widening gap between needed and actual federal investments in research and STEM education – would have devastating consequences for the U.S. economy and imperil the nation’s role as global innovation leader.

“[O]ur [nation’s] role as the world’s innovation leader is in serious jeopardy due to inadequate support for research and STEM education,” the Task Force wrote in a letter sent today to Congress and President Obama. “We believe that America must maintain a commitment to its competitiveness and future innovation capabilities. This commitment is vital to short- and long-term economic growth, especially in the competitive global economy.”

Over the past two decades, countries such as China, Singapore, and South Korea have dramatically increased their investments in research and higher education, having seen the enormous benefits such investments have had for the U.S. economy. The rate of growth of U.S. research and development investments has been outstripped by those other countries by two to four times during that period, which has compounded and grown the innovation deficit.

The Task Force’s letter follows two letters to President Obama and Congress urging them to close the innovation deficit, one that has been signed by more than 200 U.S. university presidents and the other from more than a dozen national business associations.

“We understand the broader fiscal pressures our nation faces and applaud your focus on this fundamental challenge,” the Task Force wrote in its letter. “However, undermining the nation’s support for research and STEM education will not help resolve this problem; instead it will exacerbate it, slowing down the engine that drives the innovation and economic growth that are necessary to long-term deficit and debt reduction. Wise decisions now can create a powerful legacy for future generations of Americans. We call upon you to close the innovation deficit by recommitting to strong and sustained federal support for research and STEM education.”

The Task Force’s letter, as well as additional information about the ongoing efforts to close the innovation deficit, can be found at www.innovationdeficit.org.

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The Task Force on American Innovation, a coalition of businesses and business organizations, scientific societies, and higher education associations, was founded in 2004 to advocate greater federal investments for basic research in the physical sciences and engineering. The group focuses on the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Department of Defense research budget, the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs at the Department of Commerce, and NASA.