FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 13, 2007

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INNOVATION TASK FORCE URGES PRESIDENT, CONGRESS TO AGREE ON APPROPRIATIONS, FULLY FUND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, a coalition of businesses and business organizations, scientific societies, and higher education associations, today called on President Bush and Congress to resolve their differences over Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations and quickly approve increases they both support for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science.

In a letter to the President, the Congressional leadership, and the leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the task force expressed concern that the standoff between the White House and Congress could end up harming the science funding that both support.

“We recognize that there are disagreements between Congress and the President over other budget issues,” they wrote. “But there is a consensus on federal support for science. Congress and the White House should not hold America’s innovation and competitiveness agenda captive to disputes over other issues.”

House Democrats, in their Democratic Innovation Initiative issued in November 2005 (http://speaker.gov/pdf/IA.pdf) and again in 2007, proposed to double the budgets for NSF, the DOE Office of Science and NIST over ten years. President Bush, as part of his American Competitiveness Initiative, first issued in February 2006 (http://www.ostp.gov/html/ACIBooklet.pdf), also proposed to double combined funding for the three agencies over ten years, and his FY07 and FY08 budgets have proposed substantial increases for the three agencies to follow through on his initiative.

The House and Senate have both approved FY08 appropriations bills that meet or exceed the Administration’s proposed budgets for NSF and NIST, and the full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee have both approved funds for the DOE Office of Science that also meet or exceed the Administration request.

Businesses and organizations signing the letter were Agilent Technologies, American Chemical Society, American Defense Systems, Inc., American Electronics Association, American Institute of Physics, American Mathematical Society, American Physical Society,

The text of the letter follows:

On behalf of industry, colleges and universities, and the science and engineering communities, we urge Congress and the Administration to resolve their budgetary differences and quickly enact the proposed Fiscal Year 2008 increases for the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology and the Department of Energy Office of Science. The increases have had strong White House support and strong bipartisan, bicameral backing in Congress.

The America COMPETES Act, passed overwhelmingly by the House and Senate and recently signed into law, demonstrates the extraordinary depth and breadth of support for increased federal commitments to basic research and science education. We welcome this progress. This authorizing legislation represents a landmark for science. As a nation we can ill afford the damage that would be caused by delaying funding of the programs that it highlights.

Funding for these agencies is an essential element of the nation’s efforts to sustain its economic competitiveness, national security and quality of life in the 21st century. Past investments in basic research have spurred economic growth and created entirely new technologies, such as the Internet, lasers, high-speed computers, MRI’s, and the World Wide Web, that have become vital to our daily lives. We expect no less from future investments.

We recognize that there are disagreements between Congress and the White House over other budget issues. But there is a consensus on federal investment in the physical sciences and engineering. Congress and the White House should not hold America's innovation and competitiveness agenda captive to disputes over other issues.

Therefore, we urge Congress and the Administration to work together now to fund the science agencies at the necessary levels.

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The Task Force on the Future of 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, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs at the Department of Commerce.