



Hunter Rawlings
President, Association of American Universities
Remarks at Stop Sequestration Press Conference
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Thank you all for being here. I'm Hunter Rawlings, president of the Association of American Universities, which represents 60 of the nation's top public and private research universities. As Peter McPherson said, he and I are also representing the Task Force on American Innovation, and you have a letter from the Task Force in your press packets.

The sequester is the most unpopular thing in Washington since the Dallas Cowboys. It's mindless and it will cause great harm to our nation. The President hates it. Speaker Boehner hates it. Majority Leader Harry Reid hates it. And they created it. Imagine how the rest of us feel about it. Yet somehow our leaders can't seem to figure a way out of it.

We all agree the country needs to find a more sustainable fiscal path. In our view, we need a balanced approach that includes both spending and revenues. Spending savings should focus on programs that are growing the most, not discretionary spending, which is not growing, is not the problem, and yet has already borne the brunt of cuts.

Discretionary spending is the part of the budget where America's future lies. It includes such investments as research and education. Cutting the investment in our future is not the way to solve this problem. Yet that is exactly what the sequester will do. There is a better way.

We've talked quite a bit here today about the impact of the sequester on an economy that is still recovering. I want to focus on the long term – the economy and the nation that we will leave to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

The research that is being cut so severely by the sequester affects the long-term health, quality of life, and economic and national security of these coming generations. It's how we figure out clean forms of energy, come up with medical advances that save lives and ultimately reduce the cost of health care, develop the technologies that defend our country and make our fighting men and women safer, and advance our economy. More than half of economic growth since World War II has resulted from technological advances, almost none of which would have been possible without the basic research funded by the federal government.

Sometimes this sounds awfully theoretical. But you live it every day. Let me display this lovely iPhone. Can't get along without it. You all have something like it in your pocket. Or perhaps you're looking at it and not listening to me. As a professor, I'm used to it.

This device would not exist were it not for federally funded research. Let me show you why:

1. The GPS that enables your device to guide you to your destination would not exist without the federally funded research that produced the atomic clock.
2. The touch screen, an amazing thing. It came directly from research funded by the National Science Foundation.
3. The liquid crystal display, or LCD, monitor used on these phones comes from research funded by NIH, the National Science Foundation, and the Defense Department.
4. The rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that run these phones came out of basic research funded by the Department of Energy.
5. And the integrated circuit, which you find in practically all electronic equipment, also benefited from federally funded research, as well as great skill by industry.

These great things can't keep coming if we don't invest in basic research. That's why it has had strong bipartisan support in Congress and why President Obama is such a strong advocate.

But the reality of the federal budget is that the discretionary spending from which we fund this research is getting squeezed tighter and tighter. And now the sequester cuts nondefense discretionary spending by 5 percent this year alone, which is really 9 percent because of where we are in the year. The Office of Management and Budget says this would force the National Science Foundation to issue nearly 1,000 fewer research grants and awards, curtailing the work of an estimated 12,000 scientists and students. It would require NIH to make hundreds fewer research awards.

Finally, in addition to research, the sequester would hurt students through cuts in student financial aid. It would cut work-study and other financial aid programs. Why would we penalize young Americans working their way through college? What kind of message does that send? It is not a message of opportunity.

The sequester is stupid, it is dangerous, and it should not happen. We urge the President and Congress to stop the sequester and address our fiscal challenges in a balanced, sensible way.

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