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AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

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April 7, 2015

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2449 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Sensenbrenner and Johnson:

We write to express our strong support for the goals of H.R. 1426, the Public Access to Public Science (PAPS) Act, which would make articles resulting from federally funded scientific research freely available online. The federal government invests substantially in university research – \$39.5 billion in FY 2013 – and that investment has produced tremendous benefits for the nation’s economic competitiveness, national security, and the quality of life of its citizens.

The PAPS Act would effectively reinforce in statute the thoughtful public access policy promulgated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) governing peer-reviewed articles resulting from federally funded research. The highly effective Public Access Policy of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) demonstrates how the development of the Internet and digital technologies have made it possible to dramatically expand access to the results of federally funded research. PAPS would require the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the National Weather Service to create comparable federal research public access policies.

The legislation wisely calls for each agency’s public access policy to provide for free public access to the results of research that it funds and to assure the interoperability and long-term preservation of that information. The legislation also provides agencies with the flexibility to establish their own digital repositories or employ other repositories that meet the preceding conditions and are consistent with agency missions. To the extent practicable, we would encourage all covered agencies to follow common procedures for deposition of papers, thereby substantially reducing the complexity and cost of compliance.

H.R. 1426 includes provisions intended to accommodate the essential work of publishers in developing and disseminating high-quality scholarly articles. The legislation provides for an embargo period of up to twelve months after the initial publication date of the research results published in a peer-reviewed scholarly publication. This embargo period recognizes the appropriate domain of private sector publishing and the need for subscription journal publishers to recover their real costs.

We urge, however, that the language of PAPS be clarified to explicitly mandate submission of final accepted manuscripts rather than final published articles (or Versions of Record). Although access to the final published article is highly desirable, specifying the final accepted manuscript as the required submission will both avoid confusion and ensure that the legislation does not inadvertently create inconsistencies with respect to copyright or other intellectual property laws.

Overall, we believe that PAPS is sound legislation that will expand public access to the results of federally funded research and create the infrastructure to support a growing public-private network of interoperable repositories of research articles and data across all disciplines. Such a network will greatly increase access to and use of new knowledge by scientists and scholars.

We commend you for the introduction of this important legislation and look forward to working with you throughout the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Hunter R. Rawlings III  
President  
Association of American Universities



Peter McPherson  
President  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities