DATE

The Honorable Lamar Smith

Chairman, House Science, Space

and Technology Committee

2321 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith,

As representatives of U.S. science, engineering, and higher education organizations, we write to thank you for your recognition of the important contribution social and behavioral sciences research brings to critical societal issues.

In your remarks at the Subcommittee on Research and Technology’s recent hearing on methamphetamine addiction, you noted that the National Science Foundation (NSF) “…will play an integral role towards a more complete understanding of this problem. Hypothesis-based data-driven social science research can be used to understand the behavior science behind addiction.” Your example demonstrates how fundamental research in the social and behavioral sciences can inform the important challenges we face.

At the same time, we are concerned about your recent *USA Today* piece that calls into question certain NSF grants deemed as not worthy of federal funding. Targeting specific grants or eliminating entire sets of disciplines would produce a chilling effect across the scientific community that inhibits scientific progress and our ability to tackle societal challenges. We encourage lawmakers to work in partnership with the NSF to address concerns over the allocation of federal research funding.

Therefore, we wish to express our united support for the federal research and development budget of the NSF and its mission to advance research across a broad spectrum of disciplines. NSF is unique among federal agencies in that it supports **all** disciplines in a balanced portfolio that uses the peer review system to ensure that research grant awards are based on merit.

As you know, every major issue facing modern society, including our economic competitiveness, requires knowledge drawn from multidisciplinary research that integrates advances in the physical and biological sciences with the social and behavioral sciences. Fundamental research in the social and behavioral sciences is critical to effectively responding to disasters; enhancing intelligence analysis; understanding decision-making and its impact on public health and business investments; improving international relations; and providing the infrastructure for the collection of critical data on the social, political, and economic attitudes and behaviors of Americans.

For example, NSF is funding research to address the persistent underrepresentation of women and minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields; to estimate the economic return from Research and Development (R&D) spending; to assess the links between economic development, early maturation (e.g., puberty) and public health consequences; and to analyze how people respond during massive evacuations resulting from extreme weather events.

In addition, critical research to help evaluate political stability across the world has relied on the Global Database of Events, Language, and Tone (GDELT), an initiative that permits near-real-time forecasting of conflict using publicly available political event data. GDELT has been funded by the NSF Political Science Program and other SBE programs dating back to the 1970s. Although not known at the time the initiative was created, the research, which incorporates mathematical modeling, coding, and other components, has made an important contribution to national security efforts.

Many more examples of this type of research are highlighted in a recent NSF report, [*Bringing People Into Focus: How Social, Behavioral and Economic Research Addresses National Challenges*](http://www.nsf.gov/about/congress/reports/sbe_research.pdf)*.*

We recognize the challenge that our nation faces in addressing the deficit and revitalizing our national economy, and we understand that Congress must exercise its oversight responsibilities. Our nation’s leaders, however, should never allow politics to interfere negatively with the scientific process.

The undersigned organizations urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise by ensuring that the NSF and its independent scientific panels determine where the best scientific opportunities are and how to balance limited resources. Allocating federal investments competitively through scientific merit review is the very process that has led this country to be the world leader in science.

Simply put, we need all scientists and scientific disciplines working —individually and collectively — to advance our knowledge base.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Political and Social Science

American Anthropological Association

American Association for the Advancement of Science

American Economic Association

American Educational Research Association

American Institute of Biological Sciences

American Mathematical Society

American Political Science Association

American Psychological Association

American Society of Civil Engineers

American Sociological Association

American Statistical Association

Association of American Geographers

Association of American Universities

Association of Population Centers

Association for Psychological Science

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Association of Research Libraries

Association for Women in Science

Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)

Council of Scientific Society Presidents

Council on Undergraduate Research

Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences

Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

International Society for Developmental Psychobiology (ISDP)

Linguistic Society of America

Midwest Political Science Association

National Communication Association

Natural Science Collections Alliance

Population Association of America

SAGE Publications

Society of Experimental Social Psychology

Society for Judgment and Decision Making

Society for Personality and Social Psychology  
The Ohio State University

The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology

University of California System

University of California, Davis

University of California, Irvine

University of California, San Francisco

University of California, Santa Barbara

University of Washington