



April 21, 2015

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman, Senate Commerce, Science, and
Transportation Committee
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member, Senate Commerce, Science,
and Transportation Committee
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson,

The undersigned organizations write to express deep concerns about the impact of Administration regulations and legislative initiatives related to government travel on the science and engineering enterprise and the pace of innovation. Collectively, our organizations and institutions represent and support millions of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians—including many who work for the federal government directly or as contractors—across a broad spectrum of disciplines.

A recent [GAO report](#) on the impact of federal conference and travel policies on science and technology—and [subsequent reports](#) in *The Washington Post*—has highlighted the stark reduction in government employee participation in conferences; the risks to U.S. leadership in science and engineering; and the increased administrative burden of these policies. We urge you to work with federal agencies and the scientific community to ensure that any further legislative action does not place additional red tape and administrative burdens on the U.S. science and engineering enterprise.

Current policies are reducing government scientists' and engineers' participation in scientific and technical conferences while the administrative cost of overseeing these activities has *increased* significantly. In particular, government scientists and engineers often wait many months to receive approval to participate in conferences, sometimes obtaining it just days before a conference. The bureaucratic delays prevent many government scientists and engineers from accepting key speaking roles and lead to increased travel costs associated with last-minute bookings. Further, the reductions in participation threaten the quality of research at federal labs, the stature of U.S. science on the global stage, and agencies' abilities to recruit and retain the best and brightest researchers in their fields.

The formal and informal interactions that take place at scientific and technical conferences are a crucial part of the innovation process and help to maximize the return on taxpayer investment in scientific research. Whether providing rapid pathways for bringing scientific advances to bear on societal needs, spurring new collaborations that promote exciting interdisciplinary investigations, or simply providing cost-effective venues for scientific program management and oversight, scientific conferences are crucial to the efficient functioning of our innovation ecosystem and maximizing the return on federal investments in science.

We stand ready to work with you and officials throughout the government to find a solution that ensures transparency and accountability in federal spending without impacting scientific progress and innovation.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
Academy of General Dentistry
Academy of Radiology Research
AcademyHealth
Acoustical Society of America
Alliance for Aging Research
American Academy of HIV Medicine
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Anthropological Association
American Association for Dental Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
American Association of Petroleum Geologists
American Association of Physics Teachers
American Astronomical Society
American Chemical Society
American Dairy Science Association
American Educational Research Association
American Geophysical Union
American Heart Association
American Helicopter Society
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Physics
American Mathematical Society
American Neurological Association
American Pediatric Society
American Physical Society
American Physiological Society
American Phytopathological Society
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Animal Science
American Society for Civil Engineers
The American Society of Dermatopathology
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society for Investigative Pathology

American Association for the Advancement of Science
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005 USA
Tel: 202 326 6600 Fax: 202 289 4950
www.aaas.org

American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Nephrology
American Society for Nutrition
American Society for Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
American Sociological Association
American Statistical Association
American Thoracic Society
American Veterinary Medical Association
Anxiety and Depression Association of America
Aquatic Plant Management Society
ASME
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of American Universities
Association for Computing Machinery
Association of Independent Research Institutes
Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs
Association for Molecular Pathology
Association for Psychological Science
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography
AVS: Science and Technology of Materials, Interfaces, and Processing
Battelle
Biophysical Society
Center for Policy on Emerging Technologies
Cognitive Science Society
Computing Research Association
Congress of Neurological Surgeons
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Consortium of Universities for Global Health
Council of Scientific Society Presidents
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Endocrine Society
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Federation of Animal Science Societies
Federation of Associations in Behavioral & Brain Sciences
Friends of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
Genetics Society of America
Geological Society of America
Global Health Council
Health Physics Society

HIV Medicine Association
Human Factors and Ergonomics Society
IEEE-USA
Industrial Research Institute
Infectious Diseases Society of America Center for Global Health Policy
International Wheat Genome Sequencing Consortium
IPC – Association Connecting Electronics Industries
Materials Research Society
National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems
National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Disease Research Interchange
National Ground Water Association
North Central Weed Science Society
Northeastern Weed Science Society
The Optical Society
Ornithological Council
Pediatric Policy Council
Poultry Science Association
The Psychonomic Society
Research!America
Semiconductor Research Corporation
Society for Conservation Biology
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
Society for Neuroscience
Society for Pediatric Research
Society for Research in Child Development
Society for Women’s Health Research
Soil Science Society of America
Southern Weed Science Society
SPIE
University of California System
University of Missouri System
University of Oregon
Weed Science Society of America
Western Society of Weed Science
The Wildlife Society
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

CC: The Honorable Roger Wicker
The Honorable Roy Blunt
The Honorable Marco Rubio
The Honorable Kelly Ayotte
The Honorable Dean Heller

The Honorable Ted Cruz
The Honorable Deb Fischer
The Honorable Daniel Sullivan
The Honorable Jerry Moran
The Honorable Ron Johnson
The Honorable Cory Gardner
The Honorable Steve Daines
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Claire McCaskill
The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Brian Schatz
The Honorable Edward Markey
The Honorable Cory Booker
The Honorable Tom Udall
The Honorable Joe Manchin
The Honorable Gary Peters