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Over 50 Leading American Nonpartisan Organizations Call on Presidential Candidates to Address Major Issues in Science, Engineering, Technology, Health and the Environment

WASHINGTON, D.C., August 10, 2016 — A blue-ribbon coalition of fifty-six leading U.S. nonpartisan organizations, representing more than 10 million scientists and engineers, are calling on U.S. Presidential candidates to address a set of twenty major issues in science, engineering, technology, health and the environment, and encouraging journalists and voters to press the candidates on them during the 2016 U.S. Presidential election season.

"Taken collectively, these twenty issues have at least as profound an impact on voters' lives as those more frequently covered by journalists, including candidates' views on economic policy, foreign policy, and faith and values," said ScienceDebate.org chair Shawn Otto, organizer of the effort. A 2015 national poll commissioned by ScienceDebate.org and Research!America revealed that a large majority of Americans (87%) say it is important that candidates for President and Congress have a basic understanding of the science informing public policy issues.

The group crowd sourced and refined hundreds of suggestions, then submitted "the 20 most important, most immediate questions" to the Presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Gary Johnson, and Jill Stein, "along with an invitation to the candidates to answer them in writing and to discuss them on television," said Otto. The questions and answers will be widely distributed to the science community, journalists, and the general public to help voters make well-informed decisions at the ballot box this November.

The list of organizations is a who's who of the American science enterprise.
"Sometimes politicians think science issues are limited to simply things like the budget for NASA or NIH, and they fail to realize that a President's attitude toward and decisions about science and research affect the public wellbeing, from the growth of our economy, to education, to public health. Voters should have a chance to know where the Presidential candidates stand," said Rush Holt, chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and executive publisher of the Science family of journals. "We want journalists and voters to ask these questions insistently of the candidates and their campaign staff."

"By engaging the candidates in a debate focusing on topics in science, engineering, technology, and innovation," said Marcia McNutt, President of the National Academy of Sciences. "it would

be an opportunity for all voters to gauge how the candidates would use sound technical information in their future decision making."

“Informing citizens about the health of the nation and discussing pivotal science and policy issues such as mental health, chronic and emerging diseases and other public health threats, and vaccine research, are important to not only advance the national dialogue but also improve the country’s overall well-being,” said Victor J. Dzau, President of the National Academy of Medicine.

“Ahead lie many Grand Challenges for Engineering whose solution in this century have been posited as necessary for simply maintaining our quality of life,” said C. D. Mote, Jr., President of the National Academy of Engineering. “Unfortunately, these challenges stand unrecognized in the US Presidential debates."

The groups are asking candidates to provide responses by September 6.

Nonpartisan organizations participating in the effort include:

**ScienceDebate.org
*American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Geographers
*American Chemical Society
American Fisheries Society
American Geophysical Union
*American Geosciences Institute
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering
*American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Institute of Professional Geologists
American Rock Mechanics Association
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society of Agronomy
American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists
American Society of Mammalogists
Association for Women in Geosciences
Association of Ecosystem Research Centers
Automation Federation
*Biophysical Society
Botanical Society of America
Carnegie Institution for Science
Conservation Lands Foundation
Crop Science Society of America
Duke University
Ecological Society of America
Geological Society of America
*IEEE-USA
International Committee Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies
Materials Research Society
NACE International, The Worldwide Corrosion Authority

*National Academy of Engineering
*National Academy of Medicine
*National Academy of Sciences
National Cave and Karst Research Institute
*National Center for Science Education
National Ground Water Association
Natural Science Collections Alliance
Northeastern University
Organization of Biological Field Stations
Paleontological Society
*Research!America
Scientific American magazine
Seismological Society of America
*Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Honor Society
Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections
Society of Fire Protection Engineers
Society of Wetland Scientists
Society of Women Engineers
Soil Science Society of America
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Tufts University
*Union of Concerned Scientists
University City Science Center
*U.S. Council on Competitiveness
The Wildlife Society
World Endometriosis Research Foundation America

*Codeveloper of the questions
**Lead partner organization

The consortium's list of 20 questions are available online at ScienceDebate.org/20qs.

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