



American Society of Agronomy • Crop Science Society of America • Soil Science Society of America

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January 23, 2014

Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Re: Hearing entitled “Examining Conference and Travel Spending Across the Federal Government”

The American Society of Agronomy (ASA), Crop Science Society of America (CSSA), and Soil Science Society of America (SSSA), represent over 18,000 members in academia, industry, and government, 12,500 Certified Crop Advisers (CCA), and 781 Certified Professional Soil Scientist (CPSS), as the largest coalition of professionals dedicated to the agronomic, crop and soil science disciplines in the United States. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are dedicated to developing innovative, science-based solutions to meet our growing food, fuel, feed, and fiber needs.

As you examine the issue of internal federal conferences and the progress made on oversight, we ask that you note the differences between government conferences and association conferences. Scientific and technical association meetings are an essential venue for scientific discussion, debate, collaboration and exchange that are fundamental to the conduct of science. Public-private scientific collaboration relies on this face-to-face exchange of knowledge and ideas. In 2013, our annual meeting provided opportunities for dialogue around important issues facing agriculture for over 4000 attendees from the academic, federal, and industry research sectors.

We recognize the importance of utilizing technology to help reduce cost for all conference participants. After the conclusion of our annual meeting, over 3000 presentations are loaded to our Digital Library, a complete collection of all content published by all three societies. CCA and CPSS maintain certification status by attaining a minimum requirement of 40 Continuing Education Units every two years either through online distance education technologies or at board approve educational events.

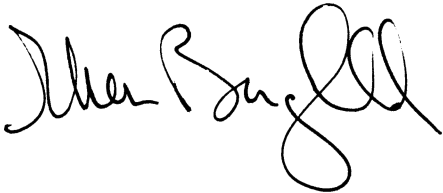
Remote access to meetings and educational events cannot replace knowledge gained from personal interactions. Innovation happens when experts across all sectors and different disciplines come together to discuss and collaborate. Our members often comment how serendipitous encounters lead to significant working relationships and enhance professional growth and development.

We urge caution on legislative proposals, that while well intentioned, would have unintended consequences of limiting the kinds of meetings and information exchange that benefit the United States competitiveness globally. We also caution Congress and the Obama Administration to not, intentionally

or inadvertently, wholly restrict federal employees from attending scientific conferences and educational events.

Thank you for your consideration. For additional information please contact Karl Anderson, Director of Government Relations, at kanderson@sciencesocieties.org or 202-408-5382.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen Bergfeld". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ellen" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Bergfeld".

Dr. Ellen Bergfeld, CEO
American Society of Agronomy
Crop Science Society of America
Soil Science Society of America