



**Bruce M. Clemens**, 2012 MRS President

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October 5, 2012

Honorable John Boehner  
United States House of Representatives  
1011 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
United States House of Representatives  
235 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington DC 20515

Honorable Harry Reid  
United States Senate  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell  
United States Senate  
351-A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader Reid, and Minority Leader McConnell:

The Materials Research Society (MRS) recognizes the importance of the federal government maintaining awareness and control on federal employee travel and meeting expenditures. Recent White House directives from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), as well as legislation proposed by the Congress (e.g. H.R.4631 Government Spending and Accountability Act), have been directed at ensuring that expenditures of federal employees traveling to conferences are appropriate and within the scope of department fiscal responsibility and transparency of public funds. MRS applauds these goals and fully recognizes the importance of such objectives as has been acknowledged on a bipartisan basis.

In the implementation of either final legislation or policy directives, we feel it is very important to not lose sight of the significant role that collaborations and idea exchange play in advancing science and technology. To that end, professional scientific society meetings serve our federal workforce and support the investment made in federal intellectual property and scientific research endeavors that are crucial for future technological innovations. If the restrictions are too onerous on travel to professional meetings, there could be unanticipated negative consequences which MRS would like to call to your attention.

Permitting federal employees in national laboratories to participate in scientific meetings allows them to interact with their counterparts and colleagues from other federal agencies, universities, and industry to help facilitate technology transfer and achievements that are central to their jobs. If taken to extreme, the new policies could have a chilling effect on scientific discovery, thereby potentially damaging our nation's unique innovation engine which is responsible for job creation, economic growth, our global competitiveness, and national security.

Unlike many professions, the nature of scientist's work requires them to share research findings with their peers and colleagues at scientific conferences and meetings. This peer collaboration process is fundamental to scientific advances and is unlikely to be achieved without this personal interaction. The impact is seen in national security, energy, health sciences, and many other fields of endeavor from which our country has benefited over many years.

The Materials Research Society represents 16,000 scientists and engineers dedicated to advancing the multidisciplinary field of materials and improving the global quality of life. MRS scientists and engineers around the world work towards fundamental breakthroughs in electronics, energy systems, aerospace technologies, biomedical devices, nanotechnology, transportation, and advanced computation and communication technologies. MRS members work at the forefront of new technologies, from basic research to product development.

Both the Congress and the Administration have demonstrated high priority emphasis for scientific research as a critical function of the federal government. We encourage you to continue to consider how these new policies and procedures ensure oversight with the minimum amount of negative impact on the US scientific enterprise.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce M. Clemens". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bruce M. Clemens, President  
Materials Research Society

cc: Chair and Ranking Member of House and Senate Appropriations Committees  
Chair and Ranking Member of Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittees  
White House Executive Office of the President and Office of Science & Technology Policy