April 21, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman, House Science, Space, and Technology Committee  
2409 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Ranking Member, House Science, Space, and Technology Committee  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson,

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

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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 Frank D. Lucas
   The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner
   The Honorable Dana Rohrabacher
   The Honorable Randy Neugebauer
   The Honorable Michael T. McCaul
The Honorable Steven M. Palazzo
The Honorable Mo Brooks
The Honorable Randy M. Hultgren
The Honorable Bill Posey
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The Honorable Bill Johnson
The Honorable John Moolenaar
The Honorable Steve Knight
The Honorable Brian Babin
The Honorable Bruce Westerman
The Honorable Barbara J. Comstock
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The Honorable Gary Palmer
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The Honorable Marc A. Veasey
The Honorable Katherine M. Clark
The Honorable Don Beyer
The Honorable Ed G. Perlmutter
The Honorable Paul D. Tonko
The Honorable Bill Foster