



28 October 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As the representative of 200,000 IEEE members in the United States, I want to thank you for your efforts to support the research and development base that relies upon federal grants and investments. We applaud Congress for passing a Continuing Resolution (CR) to avoid the impact of a Government shut-down. Now however, we urge you to do all you can to protect Federal R&D funding during the FY 2016 omnibus appropriations process.

As the nation's largest professional society for the advancement of technology for humanity, the IEEE-USA is gravely concerned about the now recurring impact of CRs on our competitiveness. Although the Resolution reduces the negative impact of the federal impasse on FY2016 funding, studies by the Government Accounting Office show conclusively that these CRs have significant, negative fiscal and programmatic impacts on not only the operations of federal Departments and Agencies, but the entire federally-funded R&D base as well.

We urge you to maintain balanced and sustained support for federally-funded research. Robust and consistent federal support for basic research is increasingly important if the United States is to maintain our innovation pipelines and technological competitiveness in a rapidly globalizing technological marketplace. Federally-funded fundamental research provides the foundation for scientific discovery and progress, ensures on-going technological leadership, promotes innovation, and is essential for maintaining America's competitiveness in the face of increasing investments from other countries.

The United States no longer maintains the confident technological lead that was once enjoyed over that of other nations and must now compete for technical markets with the EU and Pacific Rim countries. Some of the erosion is due to fiscal uncertainty and slow decision making by the U.S. government. Uncertain funding not only places novel programs on hold, but also slows the emergence of game-changing discoveries.

According to the National Academies' National Research Council, the nation improves the effectiveness of its research enterprise by providing steady, predictable funding for research. Researchers need to know that funding will be stable before they can begin multi-year research projects. And students need assurances that fellowships and other support will not disappear before they finish their degrees.

Effective bipartisan support of fundamental research has persisted for over seventy years and must continue. As President Reagan observed, "Although basic research does not begin with a particular practical goal, when you look at the results over the years, it ends up being one of the most practical things government does. Major industries, including television, communications and computer industries, couldn't be where they are today without developments that began with basic research."

Please do not hesitate to contact IEEE-USA staffer Aline McNaull at a.mcnaull@ieee.org if you wish further information on this important matter.

Sincerely,

James A. Jefferies
President, IEEE-USA



29 October 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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Sincerely,

James A. Jefferies
President, IEEE-USA

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