



May 5, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

We are writing on behalf of the Law & Society Association (LSA) to join leading scientific associations and universities in opposing the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806) in its current form. LSA is the major interdisciplinary, scientific society in the United States for social scientists and legal scholars dedicated to advancing knowledge about law, legal processes, and law-like system of rules. Association members reside in every state in the union and in most Congressional Districts, and they have a long history of doing valuable policy-relevant research that informs the civil and criminal justice systems at every level.

We are aware that that H.R. 1806 has been voted out of your committee and will be considered by the House shortly. Since you are the leadership on matters related to National Science Foundation (NSF) reauthorization, we want to underscore that we remain very troubled by this reauthorization bill, particularly two aspects that would have an adverse impact on NSF's mission and purposes:

First, breaking with precedent, the proposed bill interjects Congress into directorate-level funding decisions within NSF. This change increases the probability that political considerations will intrude in setting scientific priorities rather than relying on expert peer review and the responsibility delegated to the National Science Board and the Foundation's leadership to make difficult scientific choices about how best to balance different kinds of disciplinary and interdisciplinary research in the national interest. Second, for no articulated reason, it imposes drastic cuts on the SBE Directorate despite this small Directorate's history of funding research that has returned tens of billions of dollars to the national treasury through better designed spectrum auctions, enabled kidney transplants between chains of unrelated donors, and played a crucial role in the development of commercially viable GPS navigation systems.

One SBE Program, the Law and Social Science Program, is of particular importance to LSA members, for it is the preeminent funder of high quality law and social science research. Other SBE programs, including economics, political science, sociology, social psychology and anthropology, are also important funding sources for LSA members and their graduate students.

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To give just one example of the value of the investment in grants to law and society researchers consider eyewitness testimony. Law and Social Science Program support enabled researchers to develop a better understanding of the factors leading to mistaken eye witness identification and contributed to the development of witness-handling protocols that minimize mistaken identifications. Adoption of these protocols has not only decreased the likelihood that innocent persons will be mistakenly selected for prosecution but also means that investigations for at large criminals do not cease because law enforcement officials incorrectly believe that they have solved crimes by arrest. Simply put, there are real costs involved in faulty detection systems and in the erosion of public trust.

Recognizing the importance of maintaining if not increasing SBE funding and the still greater importance of not breaking from the principle that NSF's science leaders are best situated to determine the best balance of funding across science areas, **the Law and Society Association opposes passage of the American Competes Act in its current form and urges members of Congress to vote no on H.R. 1806.** We encourage the Congress through amendments or a substitute bill to return to the principles that are embodied in the original America COMPETES Act of 2007, legislation that was enacted with bipartisan support and the near universal endorsement of the science, higher education, and business communities. Chief among these principles are leaving science funding judgments to the experts at NSF within an overall budget established by the Congress and working to strengthen all science disciplines. H.R. 1806 does neither.

We stand ready to provide additional information or expertise to serve the best interests of science and the public served by supporting and enhancing the vitality of NSF. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Carroll Seron, Ph.D.
University of California, Irvine
President



Valerie Hans, Ph.D.
Cornell University
President-elect



Susan M. Olson, Ph.D.
Executive Officer