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SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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**HOWARD J. SILVER,**  
PH.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**ALETHA C. HUSTON,**  
PH.D.  
PRESIDENT

Dear Senator:

**I write to urge you to oppose any amendment that would reduce funding or eliminate programs at the National Science Foundation during the Senate's consideration of the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations bill. I am particularly concerned with the House of Representatives action to prohibit funding for NSF's Political Science program and implore the Senate not to enact a similar provision.**

The Political Science program has been part of NSF for over thirty years. It has supported important basic research that has enhanced the national security of this nation as well as providing significant insights into the political behavior of citizens and their leaders.

A few examples of those contributions, includes research on:

Self-governing environmental management (without government regulation or privatization), resulting in a 2009 Nobel Prize for Political Scientist Elinor Ostrom (Indiana University);

How citizens react to natural disasters and how policies can improve recovery, including Hurricane Katrina (Rice University) and the BP Oil Spill (Louisiana State University). This research has helped federal, state, and local authorities to develop effective evacuation and recovery plans, informed by decisions that citizens make in times of crisis;

The factors that encourage and sustain democracies across the world, including China (George Washington University and Old Dominion University), Afghanistan (Columbia University), Ghana and Kenya (UC San Diego), Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia (Yale University). This research illuminates the factors leading to creation, consolidation and sustainability of democracies around the world;

Causes and consequences of terrorist attacks, including how governments' strategies to combat terrorism affect the frequency of terrorist actions (Pennsylvania State University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), public responses to terrorist threats in democracies (Pennsylvania State University and Ohio State University) and in authoritarian regimes (Claremont Graduate University and Vanderbilt University). This research enables us to better anticipate international reactions to U.S. anti-terrorist strategies;

Motivations for war and the drivers of peace, including how a government's composition affects the likelihood of conflict within and across nations (University of California, San Diego), how competition for natural resources can lead to conflict (University of Georgia and University of Colorado), what increases the effectiveness of third parties in peacemaking (University of Notre Dame), and dispute resolution mechanisms that lead to lasting (rather than temporary) peace (University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa). This research allows us to anticipate and potentially resolve emerging international conflicts;

Informing and improving foreign policy, including how to make economic sanctions more effective (Rice University), reducing military conflict through trade agreements (University of Arizona), and factors which increase the effectiveness of military alliances (Rice University). This research pinpoints the features of effective foreign policy.

Gender differences in political ambition and how early socialization affects the recruitment of women in to politics (American University). This helps to explain why the United States trails many countries in the world in the presence of women in legislatures, both at national and state level.

The American National Election Studies offers long-term, comparable data on American's participation and voting behavior that is accessible to researchers and policy makers. It also has an education component that has been instrumental in providing training in survey research that has taught many of the pollsters used by politicians of all political persuasions.

The projects funded by the program go through the NSF merit review process considered to be the "gold standard" for selecting scientific projects. A recent participant in that process has written: "Political science has a much greater reach than mere opinion. There is an enormous amount of basic research being conducted within the program. [I participated in] a multi-disciplinary panel that included political scientists and the topic was cyber terrorism, trust and security. The proposals that were considered are critical to the current internet infrastructure of the US. Getting rid of the Political Science program would eliminate basic research that is critical to infrastructure."

The research funded by NSF and conducted by political scientists is first rate, pushes the boundaries of science and is relevant to contemporary society. The work touches on the underpinnings to democratic institutions, how varied citizen interests get translated into public policy, how peace can be encouraged and how economic shocks affect long-term voting patterns. All are questions of contemporary relevance. The answers to these questions are not based on opinions nor are they susceptible to 15 second sound bites. The work is complicated and sometimes uses jargon. However, that should not diminish its importance.

Political scientists offer more than glorified talking heads who comment on today's politics. They are concerned with providing scientific evidence with which to answer fundamental social and political problems. Basic science findings in Political Science are investments in knowledge. The payoffs are to current and future generations of policymakers. Eliminating the political science program cuts a critical source of independent funding for basic research to answer fundamental questions. In the long run this will hamper decision makers who will face even more complicated choices in a complex world.

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***Again, we urge you to oppose any amendment to the CJS Appropriations bill to cut NSF funding and to eliminate the political science program.***

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy group supported by over 110 professional associations, scientific societies, universities, and research centers and institutes, promoting attention to and federal funding for research in the social and behavioral sciences (Membership list enclosed). COSSA acts as a bridge between the Washington policy making community and the academic research community.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

**Howard J. Silver, Ph.D.**  
Executive Director