



**Capitol Hill Day
June 12, 2014**

Political Interference in Research

The AAUP has long opposed efforts to politicize public support for research. If basic research is to continue to advance knowledge, researchers must have access to high quality data and research proposals must be subjected to rigorous peer review, not reviews conducted by political criteria. The AAUP calls on Congress to reject all measures that would politicize the criteria by which research is approved and funded.

The AAUP opposes the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act of 2014, HR 4186 (Rep. Bucshon, IN). This bill would add an unnecessary and disruptive political review process to National Science Foundation (NSF) funding decisions. Under this legislation, the NSF would have to assert that each research project “is in the national interest,” defined by certain criteria other than the NSF’s merit-based peer review. The FIRST Act was approved by the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and is now before the full House.

The AAUP especially opposes the efforts to defund the NSF’s Directorate of Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences. Amendments to the FIRST Act and to the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (HR 4660) reject the President’s proposed increase of funding for social science research. Rep. Lamar Smith (TX), who brought the amendment to HR 4660, asked why money was being spent on a project to study rangeland management in Mongolia rather than in Texas. In a separate amendment offered by Rep. Matt Salmon (AZ), the House voted to defund on political grounds a specific, named project already approved by the NSF.

Similarly, the AAUP opposes efforts to restrict specific elements of the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey and Current Population Survey through the appropriations process, and to prevent the Department of Defense from using funds allocated under the National Defense Authorization Act to implement recommendations from recent climate change reports.

Legislators and others seeking to defund specific projects often present a false dilemma between the advancement of knowledge and other public policy concerns. When politicians can defund research using criteria outside the successful peer review process, all scientific research is potentially chilled.

The AAUP opposes legislation that would substitute the political judgment of Congress for the proven scientific peer review process.

The AAUP supports the Fair Access to Science and Technology Act of 2013, HR 708 (Rep. Doyle of Pennsylvania) and S. 350 (Sen. Cornyn of Texas), bipartisan legislation that directs federal agencies to develop public access policies for research conducted by employees of that agency or from funds administered by that agency. As ten national and regional library, publishing, research and advocacy institutions wrote in 2012, “Timely, barrier-free access to the results of federally funded research is an essential component of our collective investment in science.”

The AAUP supports full funding for the Fulbright scholarly exchange program, at no less than the fiscal 2014 level of \$234 million. New initiatives to reach young leaders in the traditionally underserved regions of Africa and Asia are most welcome, but should not be funded at the expense of the highly-successful Fulbright Program.