

## SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE IS CRITICAL TO INNOVATION AND NATIONAL SECURITY

The undersigned U.S. science, engineering and higher education organizations urge Congress to **oppose legislation that would inhibit or restrict participation in scientific and technical conferences** by federal scientists, such as the Conference Accountability Act (S.1347) in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. We believe it is possible to provide effective oversight without adding to the administrative burden and expense, or limiting the participation of federal scientists and engineers at conferences.

Federal participation in scientific and technical conferences runs the gamut from small, specialty meetings targeted to specific areas of federal interest to broad disciplinary or multi-disciplinary conferences that offer access to tens of thousands of research papers and hundreds of sessions, many of which are concurrent. Meetings are often organized as venues for interaction between scientists and engineers across government agencies and laboratories, as well as industry and universities working in areas of common interest.

Conferences provide a variety of opportunities for federal agencies to advance their research missions in real and tangible ways:

- **Information exchange** through scientific and technical conferences happens significantly faster than through published journals, leading to more rapid innovation.
- Many federal program managers use technical conferences as opportunities to engage with a wide collection of researchers for **program reviews**, future program planning, and to efficiently examine a large collection of independent research projects. Because the alternative is multiple visits to individual research laboratories, this approach represents a significant savings of both cost and time.
- Federal researchers who participate in formal presentations associated with conferences are exposed to thought-provoking questions and comments from fellow researchers and are engaged in **informal conversations** that often develop into collaborations.
- Many science and technology conferences provide undergraduate and graduate students with an opportunity to present their research through poster sessions, allowing federal researchers and program managers an **opportunity to recruit** prospective researchers.

As a community, we support efforts by Congress and the Administration to ensure the transparency and accountability of federal expenditures. However, Congress should take great care not to limit the benefits derived from U.S. government scientists' participation in scientific and technical conferences, and should also take into consideration that overly burdensome reporting policies add significantly to the administrative costs of travel to conferences. With that in mind, we encourage you to reach out to stakeholders in the science, engineering and higher education community before considering supporting any congressionally mandated oversight policies.

