March 11, 2014

The Honorable Larry Bucshon  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Research and Technology  
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
1005 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairmen Bucshon and Smith:

The United States is at a critical juncture in ensuring that a solid foundation of basic science research is built to spur the science and technology developments of the future. The America COMPETES Acts of 2007 and 2010 provided necessary building blocks, and now is the time for Congress to lay the groundwork for the next several years.

The undersigned organizations write to express our serious concerns with H.R. 4186, the Frontiers in Research, Science, Technology (FIRST) Act of 2014. The bill falls short in several respects:

- A set of “Guiding Principles” for reauthorization of the nation’s science agencies was developed by leading representatives of the scientific, business, and higher education communities; supported by many scientific societies and universities around the country; and shared with members of Congressional science committees. In our view, these principles provide a necessary framework for advancing basic science in federal science agencies, and H.R. 4186 departs from these essential principles.

- Basic science research has seen minimal growth in recent years, especially when inflation is taken into account. Steady and sustained growth over inflation is needed

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) is an alliance of over 120 professional societies, universities, and corporations advocating support for the National Science Foundation.
across all sciences. Congress must recommit to science and innovation, and the House Science Committee should take the lead. H.R. 4186 sets forth funding levels for the National Science Foundation that provide no real growth and stand to further erode our scientific infrastructure.

• The Guiding Principles state that, “to ensure our national competitiveness, we need to maintain a strong foundation of basic research across all scientific disciplines, from the physical, mathematical and life sciences, to engineering, to the social, economic, and behavioral sciences.” The Principles also urge Congress to “support funding increases without offsets that would force significant and potentially detrimental tradeoffs between one field of science and another.” H.R. 4186 provides low authorization levels for the National Science Foundation, forcing trade-offs that undercut important advances in science, and decimates the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate by authorizing funding at significantly low and unwarranted levels. The basic science discoveries in the social and behavioral sciences are critical to addressing national needs and are worthy of tax-payer support.

For these reasons, we oppose H.R. 4168 in its current form. We remain committed, however, to working with the House Science Committee to pass a reauthorization bill for the nation’s science agencies that aligns with the Guiding Principles document.

We urge you to modify the bill and set forth a vision that will spur science and technological innovation by providing real and sustained funding levels for all basic science research supported by NSF.

Sincerely,

[Organizations]