



April 21, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
US Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chair
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
US House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Lowey and Leahy:

As Congress finalizes setting federal spending priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) writes to encourage you to finalize work on the Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) appropriations process in the most expedient way that protects STEM jobs, infrastructure, research and education.

With the latest deadline quickly approaching and FY18 work still outstanding, we are concerned about what any additional delays to the appropriations process may mean for critical STEM research programs. In addition, when viewing the Presidents supplemental FY17 request to Congress, SWE finds more concern than opportunity. While some women engineers may benefit from increases to Department of Defense spending proposed in the budget, these increases are at the expense of \$18 billion in nondefense discretionary spending. Critical elements of this nondefense discretionary spending include funding for various STEM education programs, which directly supports the pipeline of women engineers into education, research, and the technical fields. We are strongly opposed to any cuts to FY17 appropriated funding proposed by the administration that negatively impact Pell Grant recipients, critical teacher preparation programs, and federal agencies such as NASA, DOE and NSF and various STEM educational programs run by these agencies.

SWE represents over 38,000 individual members across the world. Our organization advocates for public policies that promotes compliance with Title IX through promoting equity in research and the classroom, protects equal employment opportunity, fosters excellence and access to quality opportunities in the workforce, and ensures that women and girls graduating high school and college graduates leave with the skills and knowledge that support success in their career and academic aspirations.

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As a member of the STEM Education Coalition, SWE concurs that in this economy every student needs to have a strong foundation in the STEM subjects in order support the long-term economic vitality of the United States.

It is more evident than ever that high-paying jobs in the STEM fields must be filled substantially by women if we are to meet the country's economic goals. Enabling our students, particularly our women and girls, to compete in the global economy requires a strong federal commitment to improved teaching and learning in the STEM fields.

Increasing women in all stages of the engineering profession is necessary to address the industry's growing labor needs. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, job growth in the engineering industry will yield over 500,000 unfilled positions from 2014 to 2024. Yet the current pipeline of engineering talent does not include the majority of college graduates: women represent over 57 percent of college graduates but only 22 percent of the engineers entering the workforce. Within the workforce, only 14 percent of engineers are women. Women also leave the engineering profession in greater numbers than men do. Organizations operating globally also report a shortage of engineering talent outside the United States, especially for positions in management and at the executive level.

In closing, we urge you to reject the cuts proposed in the administration's supplemental request. We believe that Congress can find a bipartisan solution that respects the historic precedent to support science research and STEM education across the government.

We have included SWE's original FY17 budget request (submitted in June of 2016), for your review to reiterate our support for the FY 2017 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bills. We look forward to working with you and the members of the Appropriations committees to enact funding legislation that provides for a strong STEM foundation for America's future.

Respectively,



Jessica Rannow
President
Society of Women Engineers



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