

July 23, 2015

The Honorable Brian Schatz
United States Senate
Hart Senate Office Building, SH-722
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Coons
United States Senate
Russell Senate Office Building, SR-127A
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf 14 scientific, engineering, and defense industry organizations, we write to urge you to support modifications to a provision in the FY 2016 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill stating that “none of the funds made available in this or any other appropriations Act may be used for travel and conference activities that are not in compliance with Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M–12–12 dated May 11, 2012.” We request that the language maintain consistency with Sec. 535(e) of the FY 2016 Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill, by including the phrase “*or any subsequent revisions to that memorandum.*” after the date in reference to the OMB memo. This will allow OMB to implement a more appropriate review mechanism.

While reasonable safeguards should be in place to ensure that taxpayer funds are not used for frivolous expenditures, evidence is mounting that the current framework of conference travel restrictions is having a strong negative impact on federally funded scientific research and the ability of our federally funded researchers to participate in STEM exhibitions and events that inspire, engage and provide mentorship for our next generation of great scientists. Furthermore, data gathered by the Government Accountability Office and National Science and Technology Council have demonstrated that agencies are spending large sums of taxpayer dollars to comply with current, burdensome restrictions.

In light of this information, it is clear that changes need to be made to agency policy, and this minor modification will allow changes to proceed. Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this and other important issues before the committee.

Sincerely,

American Chemical Society

American Geophysical Union

American Helicopter Society International

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics

American Statistical Association

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

Council of Scientific Society Presidents

Entomological Society of America

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

IEEE-USA

Research!America

Society for the Advancement of Material and Process Engineering-North America

The Optical Society

SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics