



Task Force on American Innovation

Securing the future through research in the physical sciences and engineering

September 11, 2020

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Inhofe and Smith, and Ranking Members Reed and Thornberry:

On behalf of the Task Force on American Innovation (TFAI)—an alliance of industry, scientific societies, and university organizations supporting federal funding for scientific and technological research—we thank you for your efforts regarding the fiscal year (FY) 2021 National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA), S. 4049 & H.R. 6395. As you reconcile House and Senate versions of the FY 2021 NDAA in conference, we urge you to include the important research and development provisions listed below in the final conference report.

Federal investment in U.S. scientific research is essential to America's economic and national security. To compete globally, our labs and research facilities must operate with continuity and certainty, and we must continue to develop our highly skilled technical workforce, especially during these challenging times. Given these necessities, it is time to ensure that our nation's research and development capabilities, which have been severely affected by the coronavirus, are fully restored.

The FY 2021 NDAA is critical to this restoration process, because the legislation includes provisions aimed at bolstering America's R&D ecosystem and helping to maintain our leadership in innovation. As our competitors on the global stage—including China—continue to ramp up their R&D investments, the United States must respond in kind. We recognize that the president's FY21 budget request sought to reduce Defense S&T funding by more than \$2 billion; but we believe money allocated for innovation is an investment, not an expense. And if history is any indication, we know that our country will benefit for years to come from this investment.

With this in mind, we ask that you include the following U.S. scientific research and development provisions in your final NDAA conference report:

- **Semiconductor R&D and Advanced U.S. Manufacturing:** We urge you to include provisions that support U.S. research and development and advanced manufacturing, including programs that advance U.S. competitiveness in semiconductors manufacturing

and R&D, which are key technologies to leadership in artificial intelligence, exascale computing, quantum computing, and advanced telecommunication. We urge the conferees to fund these programs fully.

- **Minerva Research Initiative:** We urge you to include Section 221 of H.R. 6395 to formally authorize the Minerva Research Initiative (MRI) designed to ensure the DOD has access to important social science, managements science and information science innovations. A 2020 review of the MRI by the National Academies reported that previously funded projects have brought together a variety of social and behavioral sciences with other fields, such as computer science, engineering, and mathematics on topics relevant to national security. The conferees should support the continuation of this unique program.
- **National Artificial Intelligence Initiative:** We urge you to include in the final conference agreement Division E of the House version of the NDAA, which comprises the bipartisan National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Act of 2020. This initiative will help create a robust environment for AI research, education, and workforce development in the U.S. The strong focus on ethics, safety, security, and equal opportunity will help produce AI that functions for the good of society, and supports American global leadership in AI research.
- **Traineeships for American Leaders to Excel in National Technology & Science:** It is critical that we recommit to investing in workforce development and our nation’s pipeline of scientists and technologists. We support inclusion of Sec. 279 of the House-passed bill to create new training opportunities in areas of strategic importance to national security, and develop a process for program participants to fast-track into in-demand positions at the Department of Defense and its laboratories. Additionally, we also support increased funding for DoD fellowship programs such as the National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship.
- **Industries of the Future** (Senate Subtitle H – Industries of the Future Act of 2020): The Task Force supports this provision to ensure coordinated planning across federal research agencies to support research and development in emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, quantum information science (QIS), advanced communications, advanced manufacturing, and biotechnology. American national and economic security require that the U.S. continue as the global leader in these areas.

Thank you again for your thoughtful leadership at the helm of the FY2021 NDAA process. We look forward to continuing our work with you, as together we ensure that American remains the innovation leader of the world.

Sincerely,

The Task Force on American Innovation