



Subject: Request for a Confirmation Hearing for James O'Neill, Nominee for Director of the National Science Foundation

May 14, 2026

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Chairman, Senate Committee on Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cassidy, Ranking Member Sanders, and Members of the HELP Committee,

The organizations listed below respectfully urge the Committee to schedule a confirmation hearing for James O'Neill, the President's nominee to serve as Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), without delay and ahead of a vote. The hearing process serves a vital function, providing Senators and the broader scientific community and public with the opportunity to learn more about the nominee and his vision for NSF. Although Mr. O'Neill was previously confirmed by this Committee for a position at Health and Human Services, the NSF Director position is fundamentally different, thereby requiring a hearing.

NSF represents one of the federal government's most consequential investments in America's future. With a budget of \$8.75 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2026, NSF funds basic research and science and engineering education across virtually every field of study. The discoveries it supports form the foundational layer upon which private-sector innovation is built — from medical and agricultural advances to technologies such as semiconductors, the internet, and GPS. NSF-supported research not only generates substantial returns to the broader economy but also trains the future workforce. Maintaining American leadership in science and technology and strengthening our national security depends on the health of this agency.

The NSF Director sets the scientific and strategic priorities of the agency, represents NSF before Congress and the scientific community, and serves as a steward of public trust that undergirds federal investment in research. The six-year term of the NSF Director provides the kind of institutional stability and insulation from short-term political pressures that fundamental research requires. In short, the person occupying this role matters enormously.

For more than a year, NSF has been led on an acting basis by its Chief of Staff — a dedicated public servant who has ably led the agency, but without the statutory authority, the mandate, or the full institutional standing that a Senate-confirmed Director carries. During this period of leadership uncertainty, NSF has faced significant disruptions, the departure of more than 30 percent of its staff, the relocation of its headquarters, and the troubling recent dismissal of all

members of the National Science Board. The agency and America's scientific enterprise urgently need Congressional support and a confirmed and accountable leader. The questions surrounding NSF's direction — its funding priorities and its commitment to supporting the full breadth of fundamental research — deserve genuine examination by Congress. A confirmation hearing is precisely the venue for these questions.

We are eager to hear how Mr. O'Neill plans to keep America at the forefront of international scientific leadership. We urge a prompt confirmation hearing for Mr. O'Neill. We appreciate the Committee's attention to this matter and are grateful for your continued stewardship of the nation's science and education policy.

cc: Members, Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Respectfully submitted,

American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research
American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Geographers
American Astronomical Society
American Geophysical Union (AGU)
American Institute of Architects
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Physiological Society
American Political Science Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Engineering Education
American Society for Microbiology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET)
American Society of Plant Biologists
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
American Statistical Association
Association for Psychological Science
Association for Women in Science
Association of American Universities
Association of Population Centers
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Duke University
Ecological Society of America
Entomological Society of America
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
Federation of Associations in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (FABBS)
Lehigh University
Lewis-Burke Associates
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Materials Research Society
Michigan State University
National Association of Marine Laboratories
Northern Illinois University
Population Association of America
Population Association of America

Research!America
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics
Society for Organizational & Industrial Psychology
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR)
University of Alaska System
University of Cincinnati
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Denver
University of Illinois System
University of Oregon
University of Wisconsin–Madison
William & Mary
Woodwell Climate Research Center