

AMS Joins Other Science Societies to Advocate for Increases for Research

As the fiscal year 1998 budget has taken shape this year, the scientific community has become increasingly active in pressing Congress to insure strong support for basic research. Under the leadership of AMS president Arthur Jaffe, the Society has participated with other organizations in a series of coordinated activities designed to create a grassroots network of supporters of federal funding for scientific research. This brief report describes some of these efforts.

The current drive to build support for the science budget began in March, when the presidents of twenty-three science organizations signed a statement calling for an increase of 7% in federal support for research for fiscal year 1998 (see "Coalition Presses for Increases for Research," *Notices*, May 1997, page 585). Since then, the number signing on to the statement has doubled. Nearly every area of science is represented in this group.

The AMS has worked with various groups of societies on different components of the effort to increase funding for science, with the closest links being to the American Physical Society (APS), the American Chemical Society (ACS), and the American Astronomical Society (AAS). On certain aspects the AMS has also worked with the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). In addition, the AMS Washington Office has formed ties to a larger collection of science organizations in the nation's capital.

The AMS, APS, ACS, and AAS joined with the American Geophysical Union (AGU) to coordinate a letter-writing campaign. The five organizations arranged a schedule whereby each one was assigned a week in May or June in which it would

encourage its members to contact their Congressional representatives in support of science funding. The staggered schedule was intended to insure a continual flow of letters to Congress. On May 24 Jaffe sent an e-mail message to approximately 8,000 U.S. citizen AMS members suggesting that they contact their representatives (his letter appears in the accompanying box).

On May 14 the presidents of AMS, APS, ACS, and AAS, together with the president of the IEEE, spent a very full day in Washington, DC, meeting with members of Congress and Congressional staff, including Senators Phil Gramm (R-TX) and Joe Lieberman (D-CT) and Representatives George E. Brown Jr. (D-CA), Joseph Kennedy (D-MA), and James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). They also met with John Emling, who is on the staff of Representative Bob Livingston (R-LA), who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, a key committee in the budget process.

Senator Gramm has introduced a bill that would double funding for scientific research over the next ten years, which constitutes a yearly increase of about 7%. The fate of this bill was unclear at the time of this writing, but it appears that the meetings with the society presidents helped to build support for it. The fact that meetings were held with both Republicans and Democrats was an important part of the strategy. "Any effective political solution needs to have bipartisan support," Jaffe notes. The AMS Committee on Science Policy has also played a role in these efforts: in the two days prior to their meeting in late April, the committee held a total of sixteen meetings with members of Congress and their staff.

Efforts are under way to build support for science at the state level, through contacts with in-

dividual governors and possibly through the National Governors Association. In addition, initial steps have been taken toward garnering the support of mayors of major cities. The support of industry is a crucial component, and some of the society presidents have also been working on this front. Last year a group of leaders of major industries signed a statement of support for research, and the statement was placed as a paid advertisement in major national newspapers. This year efforts are being made to marshal a new source of support: chief executives in the financial community. In particular, Jaffe has made contacts that he hopes will lead to statements of support from this group. He is also working on developing a more formal group of science supporters from industry.

At the time of this writing, the full House had approved an authorization bill proposed by the Science Committee containing a 7.2% in-

crease for the National Science Foundation. While this is a positive sign, authorization bills are not binding. The crucial stage is that of appropriations, when Congress actually appropriates the funds. The development of the appropriations bills will take place over this summer, with the aim of passing them in time for the start of fiscal year 1998 on October 1, 1997.

“Fundamental mathematics enables progress in all scientific disciplines, so our community should explain to the public the importance of investment,” says Jaffe. “Our lives reflect the investments in research of thirty years past. Now is the time to renew our national commitment to mathematics, science, and engineering. Our country’s future depends on it.”

—Allyn Jackson

DATE: May 24, 1997

TO: All U.S. Members of the American Mathematical Society

FROM: Arthur Jaffe, AMS President

SUBJECT: Federal Science Funding

Recent federal budgets have not reflected scientific research as a critical national investment. As a percentage of GDP, federal support for research is half what it was in 1960. Moreover, total support for R&D investment, public plus private, as a percentage of GDP is nearing a 40-year low. A necessary (and possibly sufficient) condition to implement such a reversal is for mathematicians and scientists across the country to speak out. There now appears to be a window of opportunity to begin a reversal of these trends. I would like to ask your help.

You can do this by contacting your two senators and your Congressional representative, letting them know how important federal support for science is in their district and their state. This kind of constituent contact is crucial in the political process; members of Congress value relationships with constituent groups. In your letter and/or call to your members of Congress, ask them to let their colleagues on appropriations committees know that this level of support for science is needed.

It is best to write letters of your own, but sample letters are posted on the AMS Web site at the address <http://www.ams.org/committee/science-policy/>, and you can base your letter on one of these. Points to emphasize are:

1. *you are a constituent,*
2. *science is a critical federal investment,*
3. *an increase in science funding is achievable and necessary.*

To have impact you should write or call your representative’s office immediately. Address letters to senators and members of the House as follows (Do NOT use e-mail!):

The Honorable [name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable [name]
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

For names of your senators and members of the House, plus telephone and fax information, check the link “How to find your senator or representative” on the AMS Web site above. Recently the leaders of forty-six scientific societies signed a “Joint Statement on Scientific Research”, which is also posted at the AMS Web site. You can also find there a description of some recent and proposed legislation by Congress.

—Sent in e-mail to 8,000 U.S. citizen American Mathematical Society members