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Douglas Richardson

May 26, 2017

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

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

We sent the attached letter to you in late March regarding the Administration's budget blueprint. Now that the full budget has been released, we felt it was important to reaffirm the thoughts we shared with you previously and to offer insights about a few issues that were not covered in the blueprint document.

We at the American Association of Geographers (AAG) are especially concerned about the proposed cut of \$800 million (11 percent) from the budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF). The Foundation provides research grants and education activities that power our nation's innovation and economic competitiveness. A loss of \$800 million in funding would weaken NSF's ability to support the cutting-edge science that has made a difference in every American's life. We ask that you reject this shortsighted cut.

Another aspect of the budget that concerns us is the Administration's stated goal of reducing reimbursement of indirect costs in research grants. Indirect costs, which support salaries, facilities, and other expenses crucial to carrying out funded projects, are a vital component of Federal research grants. Most institutions would face significant difficulty in adapting to such a policy change and it would likely cause many universities and others to rethink their approach to seeking grant funding from Federal agencies.

You have our best wishes as you begin your work in earnest on the Fiscal Year 2018 appropriations process. As we noted in March, we would be willing to share the geographic expertise of our members and our geographical information systems analytical tools to assist in your analysis of the impacts of the budget proposal, as well as alternative budget scenarios. Please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Doug Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Douglas Richardson, PhD
Executive Director