

February 23, 2021

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
1236 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
2468 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader Schumer, and Leader McConnell:

We write today on behalf of the Science and Technology Action Committee (STAC), non-profit, academic, foundation, and corporate leaders advocating for significantly bolstering our nation's science and technology (S&T) capacity. Our purpose is to request that you help empower our nation, as part of the economic recovery package, to never again be overwhelmed by a threat to the American people. By providing the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) with the resources needed to leverage agency-specific efforts into efficient, coordinated strategic imperatives and form public-private sector partnerships, our nation can begin to outmaneuver threats before they overtake us.

Future threats will necessitate a robust response from the nation's S&T enterprise. OSTP is uniquely positioned to be the federal entity to expeditiously and dramatically bolster our response. We applaud the elevation of the President's science advisor to the Cabinet, one of our three recommendations. This appointment, the first in modern U.S. history, signals that science is now at the table not only figuratively but literally. However, OSTP, the agency led by the science advisor, currently has a budget of \$5.5 million, diminutive relative to that of other Cabinet officials and certainly to the scope of the challenges at hand, whether it be preparing for future pandemics, investing in technologies to halt climate change, or identifying novel methods of agriculture to address food and water insecurity.

We propose that OSTP be provided \$1B in mandatory funding, as part of the Build Back Better Economic Recovery package, to guarantee strategic coordination of the nation's S&T enterprise. A novel mandatory funding stream would help ensure a robust and stable budget to motivate and coordinate inter-department and inter-agency collaboration to address massive challenges that threaten our nation, and indeed the globe.

These new funds could be leveraged by the existing National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), which operates under the auspices of OSTP. We propose that the NSTC would employ four coordinators, each charged with oversight of one of four National Initiatives: 1) Public Health and Healthcare 2) Environment and Climate Change 3) Food and Water Security and 4) Energy Storage, Production, and Utilization. Each would receive sufficient mandatory funding

(initially, we suggest \$250M each, totaling \$1B, which is less than 0.7% of the federal R&D allocation) to incentivize, integrate and enhance cooperative mechanisms and programs across S&T-relevant department and agency boundaries as well as STEM education, and additionally to attract participation from the private sector.

As outlined in the [Science & Technology Action Plan](#), we assert that the US must invest far more robustly in S&T as a fraction of GDP, a commitment that has declined since its peak in 1964. In addition, we also must align and leverage disparate S&T activities across the federal government while engaging the private sector in strategic partnerships aimed at out-innovating a range of existential threats.

COVID-19 isn't just a crisis, it is a harbinger. Our nation's scientists know that we face perils ranging from climate change to food, water and energy scarcity to setbacks in life expectancy for Americans (that preceded the pandemic) to the foreseeable gap between energy needs and supply to the inevitable emergence of other infectious diseases. We know that global economic competitiveness is a burgeoning challenge, and that the corrosive effects of injustice, inequity and intolerance are jeopardizing our future as a cohesive, secure, and prosperous democracy.

Equipping OSTP with \$1B in mandatory funding as part of the economic recovery package is an investment in a national initiative to save lives, safeguard jobs and the businesses that produce them, and ensure that our nation can meet the goals and aspirations of the American people. At your convenience, we would value the opportunity to meet with you and your staff members to discuss this proposal.

Please call on any [member of the committee](#) if we can answer questions or be of assistance as you consider this request. Thank you and your staff for your vision, leadership, and public service during this challenging time.

Sincerely,



Sudip Parikh, Co-Chair
CEO, AAAS



Mary Woolley, Co-Chair
President & CEO,
Research!America



Keith R. Yamamoto, Co-Chair
Vice Chancellor for Science
Policy & Strategy, UCSF