

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

SUITE 2320 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301
(202) 225-6371
TTY: (202) 226-4410
<http://www.house.gov/science/welcome.htm>

June 30, 2005

Dr. Bruce Alberts
President
National Academy of Sciences
2101 Constitution Avenue
Washington, DC 20418

Dear Dr. Alberts:

We understand that the National Academies, in response to a request from Senators Alexander and Bingaman, are in the early stages of developing a study related to the urgent challenges facing the United States in maintaining leadership in key areas of science and technology. Because the Science Committee considers ensuring the strength and vitality of the Nation's scientific and technology enterprise an important part of its broad oversight responsibility, we are writing to endorse the request for this study and to encourage the National Academies to carry it forward expeditiously.

In addition, we would like to suggest some specific questions we hope to see addressed by the study:

- What skills will be required by the future U.S. science and engineering workforce in order for it to command a salary premium over foreign scientists and engineers? Are alternative degree programs needed, such as professional science masters degrees, to meet the needs of industry and to lead to attractive career paths for students?
- Are changes needed in the current graduate education system, such as: a different mix in graduate support among fellowships, traineeships and research assistantships; and more research faculty positions and fewer postdocs and graduate students in traditional graduate programs?
- Should a greater proportion of federal research funding be allocated to high-risk, exploratory research and should funding priorities among broad fields of science and engineering be readjusted?

- What policies and programs will help ensure the rapid flow of research results into the marketplace and promote the commercialization of research in a way that leads to the creation of good jobs for Americans?

The Committee looks forward to reviewing the results of this effort, and hopes that a draft response would be available by September 30, 2005. We hope that the new and innovative ideas you produce as the result of this effort will be able to translate into policies that will enhance U.S. prosperity in the 21st century. If you have any questions, please contact Dan Byers of the Majority Staff or Jim Wilson of the Minority Staff.

Sincerely,



SHERWOOD BOEHLERT
Chairman



BART GORDON
Ranking Member