

November 4, 2004

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

FACSIMILE SENT TO: 202-224-4654

Dear Senator Mikulski:

On behalf of the Weather Coalition, a group of academic, nonprofit and industry members (list attached) involved in advancing weather research and forecasting, we write to urge you to provide the maximum support possible for the FY 2005 budgets of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Specifically, we urge the adoption in conference of the Senate position on NSF, which provides \$5.75 billion for the agency, \$4.4 billion for NSF's Research and Related Activities (R&RA), and \$728.5 million for the Geosciences Directorate (GEO). Congressional support for NSF's R&RA account is absolutely critical; the basic research funded by NSF is inextricably related to growth in the nation's economy, our quality of life, the safety of citizens, the protection of property, and our national security.

Further, for the benefit of the country, we urge you to pay particular attention to NSF's Geosciences Directorate as you hold conference proceedings. The U.S. incurs billions of dollars in annual costs due to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, ice storms, blizzards, heat waves, and other severe weather events. This year, hurricane damage was extraordinary. Basic weather research leads to better forecasts which save money and lives in properly evacuated areas, rerouted planes, utility company fuel savings, troop movement timed to avoid storms, and other mitigation efforts. NSF's GEO contributes to the nation's weather research and research applications activities through extensive support for the university research community and the National Center for Atmospheric Research.

With respect to NASA, we urge you to adopt the Senate's expression of concern over the fate of NASA's science programs given the new emphasis on exploration of the Moon and Mars. The passage in question mandates that the National Academies' Space Studies Board "develop a strategy by which all of NASA's science disciplines, including Earth science, space science, and life and microgravity science, can make adequate progress towards their established goals, as well as providing scientific research in support of the new policy." The Weather Coalition strongly supports the development of such a strategy. NASA plays a critical role in improving our understanding of the Earth as well as that of other planets. NASA satellites contribute indispensable observations of

the Earth's atmosphere that form the basis for much weather research and forecasting. While we applaud the Administration's decision to establish visionary new goals for NASA exploration, we join with the scientific community in our concern that NASA's excellent and important research programs may suffer as a result. By adopting the Senate language, you will send a clear message that NASA's historically strong support for science must continue for the good of the country.

We would like to thank you for your attention to these requests and for your leadership on research funding issues that are of critical importance to this nation.

Sincerely,

Ray J. Ban
Executive Vice President
The Weather Channel

John T. Snow
Director, Oklahoma Weather Center
and Dean, College of Geosciences

C: Paul Carliner

Attachment