



Ecological Society of America
1990 M Street, NW
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

May 31, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chairman Upton and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the Ecological Society of America, the nation's largest society of ecologists with 10,000 members, I write to express concern with the House amendment to S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2016.

The Society is pleased that Congress is working on bipartisan comprehensive energy legislation that includes investments in scientific research, which is the first such legislation since the Energy Independence and Security Act (P.L. 110-147) was signed into law in 2007. However, we are concerned that the funding authorized in this legislation falls well below existing funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 for Department of Energy (DOE) scientific research programs that was agreed upon with bipartisan, bicameral support last year. These reductions, coupled with restrictions on certain research areas, would hinder new discoveries and innovation in important areas of ecological research.

The DOE Office of Science Biological and Environmental Research (BER) conducts research into the study of the atmosphere, land, oceans, sea ice, and subsurface. This research helps us understand and forecast long-term changes in earth's climate patterns and how these changes affect human society. Unfortunately, the House amendment BER authorization FY17 level is 9.7 percent, or \$59 million, below the FY16 appropriated level. It is also 7.6 percent below the current level in the FY17 House Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill. Additionally, the amendment attempts to authorize a 9.7 percent cut to the enacted funding level for FY16.¹

¹ House Amendment, Division D (Science), See Section 510(a)(3).

The House amendment would prevent BER from carrying out climate science-related initiatives that are identified by General Accountability Office (GAO) as “overlapping or duplicative” with initiatives of other federal agencies. While these efforts should be, and are, coordinated across the government, this language disregards the value of independent replication of research results. Further, the GAO has noted in a recent report that its use of the term “duplicative” did not mean that a particular federal effort was not valuable. BER would also be required to “prioritize fundamental research on biological systems and genomics science” over climate and environmental research, even when an independent merit review process determines that research opportunities in the latter areas may warrant more funding than the former in any given year.²

Enactment of this energy bill presents a grand new opportunity for the United States to support research that advances research and investment in clean and efficient energy sources. We appreciate your efforts to ensure that S. 2012, the Energy Policy Modernization Act of 2016, provides adequate support for the research that has broad impacts on our health, our environment, and our energy future.

Sincerely,



Katherine McCarter
ESA Executive Director

CC: The Honorable Lamar Smith, Chair; House Science, Space and Technology Committee
The Honorable Eddie Bernie Johnson, Ranking Member; House Science, Space and Technology Committee

² House Amendment Division D, Section 505(b).