

Published on *American Geosciences Institute* (<https://www.americangeosciences.org>)

Home > House Science, Space, and Technology Committee approves FIRST Act

House Science, Space, and Technology Committee approves FIRST Act

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology approved the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act (H.R. 4186) by a party-line vote of 20-16 in a markup held on May 28. The FIRST Act reauthorizes federal funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP).

The FIRST Act would bring changes to the NSF funding process by having Congress set funding at the directorate level, whereas current legislation allows NSF to allocate funds among the directorates. The bill would cut the Geosciences Directorate budget by 3 percent and would cut the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate budget by 30 percent, while boosting funding for other directorates. The FIRST Act authorizes \$127 million less for NSF than the fiscal year 2015 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill (H.R. 4660) currently under consideration by the Senate. The bill would require scientists to prove each grant's unique scientific merits and direct relevance to the broad national interest before funding is granted.

In the first part of the markup held on May 21, Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) stated that NSF should focus on areas that lead to technological innovation and job growth, such as physical science and engineering. Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) opposed passage of the bill, voicing concern that it diminishes the ability of the scientific community and the country to advance science and innovation. An amendment offered by Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) that shortens the embargo period for open access to federally funded research from 24 months to 12 months was also approved by voice vote.

The bill will now be referred to the full House for further consideration.

Sources: American Association for the Advancement of Science, E&E Daily, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Updated 6/9/14
