

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

Home > Federal science bill passes House amid funding debate

Federal science bill passes House amid funding debate

May 22, 2015

On May 19, the House voted to approve the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806). The bill authorizes funds for fiscal year (FY) 2016 and 2017 to several federal science agencies, including the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Office of Science and applied research and development at the Department of Energy (DOE), and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The legislation passed despite objections from the scientific community and House Democrats over budget cuts to geosciences, social and behavioral sciences, and renewable energy research.

The COMPETES Act must still pass the Senate and avoid a veto from President Obama, who preempted the House vote with a statement vowing to veto the legislation in its present form. The bill would not merely authorize funding for the NSF as a whole; it would set funding for individual science directorates within NSF, a task that has traditionally been done by NSF itself. The bill would cut the Geosciences Directorate budget by 8 percent and the Social, Behavioral, and Economics Directorate budget by 45 percent from FY 2015. The DOE's Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), which was established in 2007 to channel cutting-edge energy research into new technologies, would be cut 50 percent.

In an op-ed for *The Hill*, Lamar Smith (R-TX), the bill's sponsor, wrote that COMPETES would prioritize "physical sciences and biology, from which come most of the scientific breakthroughs with the potential to stimulate new industries and jobs." During a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing, Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA) countered that legislators should be "very wary of intervention" in marking funds for specific areas of research.

Sources: American Association for the Advancement of Science, Congress.gov, E&E News, *The Hill*, ScienceInsider, Whitehouse.gov

Updated June 8, 2015
