

June 27, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned science and engineering organizations are concerned about the future of scientific advice in the U.S. federal government and the presentation of scientific data and information on government websites. There have been a number of reports regarding scientific information on government websites and the status of government scientific advisory bodies that have generated unease among the scientific community about the future role of science in government.¹

At the interface of science and society, the federal government and its research agencies play a critically important role. The capacity to understand and effectively address important policy issues depends on access to relevant scientific and technical expertise. At the same time, government agencies provide an important link between the public -- as beneficiaries of federally funded research -- and federal information, including scientific and technological information. Hence, it is vital that government agencies maintain and secure access to scientifically accurate information.

We urge federal agencies, as they reassess the role and composition of scientific advisory bodies, to ensure that the process of obtaining scientific and technical advice follows the letter and spirit of the Federal Advisory Committee Act and is in accord with democratic principles of governance.

Federal advisory committees are an essential means for the government to have access to expert advice and ideas that reflect a broad spectrum of scientific disciplines. Advisory committees should include diverse points of view. However, requirements for balanced representation should pertain to scientific and technical competence and disciplinary focus. The selection, removal or replacement of advisory committee members or the disbanding of advisory committees based on criteria extraneous either to the science and technology issues that the agency addresses, or the

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-kicks-website-updates;>
<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/epa-sheds-38-more-science-advisors;>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/under-trump-inconvenient-data-is-being-sidelined/2017/05/14/3ae22c28-3106-11e7-8674-437ddb6e813e_story.html?utm_term=.831c33f279bd

representation of stakeholder interests, compromises the integrity of the process of receiving scientific advice.

Furthermore, it is vital that government agencies provide, maintain and secure access to scientifically accurate information. Such information includes not only publicly funded databases, but also interpretative materials and resources that are easy to find, access and share, within the limits of national security, privacy and proprietary rules. Current scientific and technological knowledge is the foundation for future research, experimentation, debate, consensus-building and understanding. Scientifically accurate information builds the foundation for public policies that promote the well-being of people and communities.

The scientific community welcomes opportunities to work with Administration leaders, members of Congress and their staff, and other policy leaders at all levels of government to understand and utilize scientific evidence that informs policy.

Sincerely,

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Chemical Society
American Geophysical Union
American Geosciences Institute
American Institute of Biological Sciences
American Meteorological Society
American Society of Agronomy
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Plant Biologist
American Statistical Association
Crop Science Society of America
Ecological Society of America
Soil Science Society of America
The Oceanography Society

Copies: Federal Agency Heads