

American
Physical
Society

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President
Homer A. Neal
University of Michigan

November 18, 2016

President-Elect
Laura H. Greene
Florida State University

The Honorable Daniel Lipinski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Research and Technology
2346 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Vice President
Roger W. Falcone
*University of California,
Berkeley*

Past President
Samuel H. Aronson
*Brookhaven National
Laboratory*

Dear Representative Lipinski:

Chief Executive Officer
American Physical Society
Kate P. Kirby

On behalf of the American Physical Society (APS) and its more than 53,000 members, I am happy to express our support for H.R. 5583 (2016): University Regulation Streamlining and Harmonization Act (URSHA). We greatly appreciate your initiative to reduce the regulatory burden on federally funded academic researchers. Currently, compliance with federal regulations demands an estimated 25 percent of total research expenditures. URSHA provides a much-needed means of recalibrating existing regulatory practices; enables the more efficient use of federal grant funds; and thereby helps maximize the nation's return on its science and technology investment.

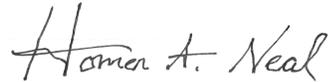
In particular, APS strongly supports Sections 5, 6 and 8. Section 5 provides an exemption from redundant subrecipient monitoring practices for institutions that already meet the requirements of the Single Audit Act. While regular audits of federally funded research institutions ensure taxpayer dollars are spent appropriately, duplicative monitoring for collaborating institutions diverts resources away from research and provides no new information. Section 6 resets the micro-purchase threshold to \$10,000, which allows for greater speed and flexibility in the procurement of research equipment. Section 8 modifies the duties of the Inspector General (IG) at the federal research funding agencies and puts the focus of the IG on detecting waste, fraud and abuse. It requires that only findings sustained by the agency during the audit of a research institution be published in the IG's public reports, which include its semiannual reports to Congress.

In addition, APS supports the creation of a Research Policy Board, as outlined in Section 4, to advise on and oversee regulatory protocol for academic research institutions. This section requires the Government Accountability Office to assess the board and also "the degree to which federal research funding agencies and the Office of Management and Budget take into account the input of the Board." APS believes this bidirectional review process is crucial to keeping the board both relevant and effective. However, Sec. 4 (e) (10), which concerns the preparation of "an annual report on progress made by the board toward reforming and streamlining research regulations," lacks specificity. APS suggests including more detailed language and proposes replacing the word "progress" with the phrase "the recommendations and implementations" to encourage concrete actions toward reform.

APS also recognizes that the regulatory issues affecting academic research institutions likely impact other organizations outside of the university setting, including the Department of Energy's national laboratories and other federally funded research and development centers. While beyond the scope of this bill, we urge Congress to consider a broader streamlining of research regulations in the future.

We look forward to continuing to work with your office as this bill moves forward. Thank you for your consideration and for your dedication to assisting the scientific community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Homer A. Neal". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Homer A. Neal