

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 7, 2025

Dear Colleague:

Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Ave
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Director Panchanathan:

We write to express concern about funding delays and widespread confusion at universities and research organizations across the country, resulting from the Trump Administration's Executive Orders.

In 1950, Congress established the National Science Foundation (NSF) as an independent federal agency to "promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." Since then, the NSF has served as a critical facilitator and funding source for U.S. research at universities, and has contributed to countless modern advancements – from medical imaging and kidney matching, to Doppler radar and geographic information systems (GIS), to sign language and 3D printing. NSF's achievements have relied on its longstanding, merit-based, independent approach to advancing scientific discovery.

In light of NSF's congressionally mandated mission, we are deeply concerned by recent reports that the Trump Administration's memoranda and Executive Orders forced the NSF to pause all grant review panels, initiate a re-examination process for existing awards, and develop plans to dismiss a significant portion of the agency's workforce within the next two months. We believe these actions are having a devastating impact on our universities and their ability to sustain robust research programs. These pauses will also undermine NSF's competitive, peer-reviewed research selection process, and could result in a corrupt research system based on ideology and party loyalty rather than independent, scientific inquiry and intellectual integrity.


Given the severity of this threat, we request that you provide written answers to the following questions by February 13, 2025:

1. Have agents of the so-called Department of Government Efficiency established a presence at NSF? If so, what measures and directives have they established? What access to NSF's computer systems do they have? Do they have sufficient clearances and background checks?
2. How much research funding has been placed on hold?
3. How many grant review panels has NSF canceled?
4. Will all grant review panels be rescheduled? If so, for when?

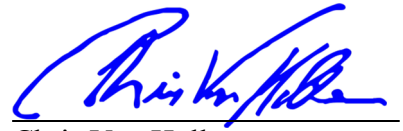
5. Will delays in grant approvals impact faculty and students who depend on NSF grants for financial support?
6. Is it standard practice for NSF to re-examine existing awards once a new administration takes office?
7. How many existing awards is NSF re-examining?
8. Will NSF terminate any existing awards?
9. Is NSF planning to dismiss “between a quarter and a half of its staff in the next two months,” as reported by *E&E News*? If so, what authorities enable the NSF to take this action?
10. How would NSF ensure that any reduction in force complies with the requirements of Division C, section 505 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law 118–42)?
11. How will these proposed layoffs comply with the agency’s union agreements?

We appreciate your attention and prompt response to this important matter.

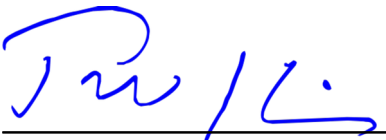
Sincerely,



Jack Reed
United States Senator



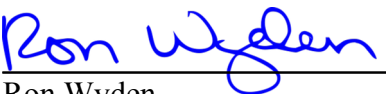
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



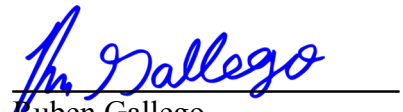
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
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Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
U.S. Senator



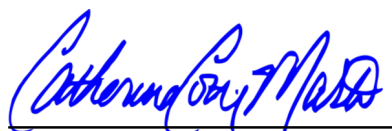
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United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
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Jeffrey A. Merkley
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United States Senator



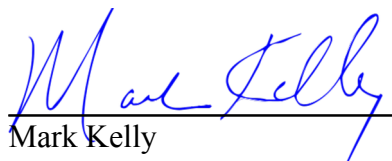
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator




Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



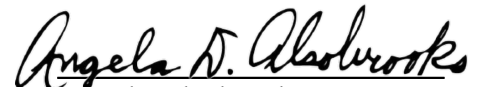
Mark Kelly
United States Senator



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United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
Angela Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator