

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House of Representatives has voted to put the government on track to double funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) over the next 10 years. The NSF Authorization Act (H.R. 1867) passed the House by a vote of 399 – 17 shortly before midnight.

Congressman David Price (D-NC) applauded the move, which he says will provide a significant boost to Triangle area scientists who are seeking federal grant support for their research. An original Price initiative to help students prepare for jobs in high-tech fields also received generous support in the bill.

"In the Triangle we are well aware of the importance of investing in scientific research," Price said. "In our modern global economy, we need to play to our country's strengths, one of which is our unparalleled capacity for research and innovation. This bill sets Congress on a path to significantly increase our investment in scientific research, and that will translate into jobs and innovation in North Carolina. It will also strengthen America's hand in the global economy."

The NSF bill would authorize \$21 billion in funding for the agency over three years, including increased funding for math and science education. If Congress maintains this level of percentage increase, the money available to support researchers through NSF grants will double in ten years.

The NSF bill also would provide a funding increase of 22 percent over the next two years for the Advanced Technology Education program (ATE). In 1992, Congressman Price authored the legislation that established ATE, which seeks to prepare students for jobs in the high-tech fields. The program involves partnerships between academic institutions and employers to promote improvement in the education of science and engineering technicians at the undergraduate and secondary school levels. The initiative has provided significant support to North Carolina's community colleges and universities since its inception.

"Low skill, low wage industry is a thing of the past; America's future will be in knowledge based and globally competitive industry and services," said North Carolina Community College System President H. Martin Lancaster. "Congressman Price's initiative in support of Advanced Technology Education is critical to that economic transition. Thousands of community college students all over the country will prepare themselves for brighter futures in specialized, high

tech fields as a result of the expansion of important initiative."

Price, who is a member of the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for funding the NSF, will be working to uphold the funding levels this bill would authorize for ATE and NSF. The House is expected to consider the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations bill before July 4th.

Background

- Each year, NSF supports an average of about 200,000 scientists, engineers, educators and students at universities, laboratories and field sites, and makes up 20 percent of all federal money awarded for basic research at American universities.
- NSF has the broad mission of supporting science and engineering and funding basic research across many disciplines. Basic research serves as the building blocks of technological advancement, but because it doesn't always lead directly to the creation of new products and services, basic research is often not a priority for private investment. Adequate federal funding for basic research is essential to strengthening this foundation for innovation.
- The bill also would establish a pilot program of one-year seed grants for new investigators to stimulate higher-risk research, and encourage NSF to foster relationships between academia and industry in order to spawn U.S. competitiveness.
- Congress and President Clinton made significant gains in funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the 1990s, doubling its research budget over 5 years. The NSF bill represents the 2nd step in the original Clinton Administration goal to double federal research funding.

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