



H.R. 3293—Scientific Research in the National Interest Act (Rep. Smith, R-TX)

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FLOOR SCHEDULE:

Scheduled for consideration on February 10, under a structured [rule](#).

TOPLINE SUMMARY:

[H.R. 3293](#) would require greater accountability for federal funding for scientific research, while continuing to promote scientific progress in the United States.

COST:

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that implementing H.R. 3293 would not alter the National Science Foundation's authority to make grants or increase its administrative expenses.

CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS:

There are no substantive concerns.

- **Expand the Size and Scope of the Federal Government?** No.
- **Encroach into State or Local Authority?** No.
- **Delegate Any Legislative Authority to the Executive Branch?** No.
- **Contain Earmarks/Limited Tax Benefits/Limited Tariff Benefits?** No.

DETAILED SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS:

The [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF) provides funding through grants and cooperative agreements to support breakthroughs and discoveries in diverse scientific fields. There is concern, however, that an increased number of grants that have been approved lack the scientific merit or national interest required to merit federal funding. In January of 2015, the NSF expressed a need for increased transparency, and established a policy requiring clear, understandable explanations of each research grant awarded, including an explanation of how the grant advances the national interest. This legislation would codify similar requirements.

This bill would require the NSF to make a determination that every research grant or cooperative agreement is in the national interest and is worthy of federal funding. Such determination would be required to demonstrate how a project would advance several goals, including: promotion of the progress of science for the United States; increased economic competitiveness; advancement of the health and welfare of the American public; development of a globally competitive STEM workforce; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement in the sciences; increased partnerships between academia and industry; or the support of national defense.

H.R. 3293 would require a public announcement of all federal funding awards, including a written justification for how the award meets the above accountability standards. It would also instruct that the legislation does not alter the Foundation's merit or impact the evaluation of grant applications.

The text of this legislation was previously passed on May 20, 2015, as Section 106 of the House [passed H.R. 1806](#), the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015. The RSC legislative bulletin for the America COMPETES Reauthorization can be found [here](#).

The Committee Report can be found [here](#).

AMENDMENTS

1. [DelBene \(D-WA\)](#) – This amendment would clarify that language in the bill referring to the development of the STEM workforce would also include the computer science and information technology sectors.
2. [DelBene \(D-WA\) 2](#) – This amendment would clarify that this legislation would not impact grant funding that has already been awarded by the NSF.
3. [Johnson, Eddie Bernice \(D-TX\)](#) – This amendment would replace subsection 2(b), “Determination,” to clarify it as a justification by a foundation official that a grant or cooperative agreement is in the national interest to promote the progress of science, to advance the national health, prosperity and welfare, and to secure the national defense and is worthy of federal funding.
4. [Jackson Lee \(D-TX\)](#) – This amendment would replace the phrase “basic research” with “applied research.”
5. [Jackson Lee \(D-TX\) 2](#) – This amendment would establish a new research objective so that research conducted is consistent with established and accepted scientific methods to the field of study of exploration.
6. [Jackson Lee \(D-TX\) 3](#) – This amendment would establish a new research objective to ensure that the research conducted is consistent with the definition of basic research as it would apply to the purpose and field of study.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

H.R. 3293 was introduced on July 29, 2015 and was referred to the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology, where it was reported on February 2, 2016.

ADMINISTRATION POSITION:

A Statement of Administration Policy is not available.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY:

According to the sponsor, Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to Article I, Section 8, clause 18 of the United States Constitution, stating “the Congress shall have power to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department of Officer thereof.”

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