

Science Policy Office

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www.agronomy.org | www.crops.org | www.soils.org

The American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and Soil Science Society of America are participating in an effort (coordinated by the American Physical Society) to reach out to all students in the science and technology fields to speak as one voice to Congress to preserve research funding.

ACTION: The availability of federal science funding has a profound impact on your professional future as a scientist, and that funding is threatened by impending cuts. Please sign on to a letter (see below) from students asking Congress to avoid damaging, across-the-board budget cuts (known as sequestration) and instead compromise on a sustainable fiscal path for America.

BACKGROUND: As a student, federal budget cuts to research impact your future. If there is no further action from Congress, on January 2, 2013 there will be across-the-board cuts to all federal discretionary spending, including science, technology and research programs. These cuts will impact undergraduate research opportunities, funding for graduate students to pursue research, post-doc and industry jobs, and will threaten the largest single driver of economic growth: scientific and technological innovation.

The good news is that there is still time for Congress to act and **you** have a say in the matter. As a future leader in the scientific enterprise, **your** voice is important on Capitol Hill.

We urge you to sign on to this letter to Congressional leadership stressing the need for a compromise that avoids the January 2, 2013 across-the-board budget cuts.

To sign this important letter go to <http://ultron.aps.org/forms/aps.cgi?ID=1084#seques>

Please forward this to your friends and classmates and urge them to sign as well.

Dear House and Senate Leaders and Members:

We, the undersigned XX thousand students, are concerned about our future as scientists and engineers in America. On January 2, 2013, with no further legislative action, sequestrations will reduce the federal support of science by 9 percent, a reduction of more than \$15 billion at a time when other countries are prioritizing scientific investment. While we must adopt practices to live within our means, we must not do so by compromising our future prosperity.

We urge you to resume consideration of a comprehensive deficit reduction plan that not only ensures fiscal stability but also sustains the scientific and technological enterprise that is responsible for 70 percent of modern economic growth. As the bipartisan Bowles-Simpson Committee noted in December 2010, even as we cut spending we must continue to "invest in education, infrastructure, and high-value research and development to help our economy grow, keep us globally competitive, and make it easier for businesses to create jobs."



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As future leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, we will be the ones to build a better America, but we cannot begin that journey without the necessary training or future job prospects. Becoming a leading scientist or engineer requires extensive training at cutting-edge research laboratories, many of which are federally supported and located within universities. Sequestrations threaten to further cut funding for these labs, effectively choking off the centers that educate and prepare us as future innovators.

We recognize that little time remains between now and the January 2, 2013, date of reckoning. But the stakes are so high that the ideological gridlock, which has hampered progress on deficit reduction, must be broken now for the sake of the future.

Respectfully,

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND on SEQUESTRATION:

What is nondefense discretionary (NDD) funding?

Discretionary programs differ from "entitlement" programs, such as Social Security and Medicare, that are funded automatically to meet the needs of all who qualify for them. Discretionary programs are those that Congress funds annually through the appropriations process. Congress retains complete discretion on whether, and at what level, to fund discretionary programs. Nondefense discretionary or "NDD" programs are core nondefense government functions, including scientific research; education and job training; infrastructure; public safety and law enforcement; public health; weather monitoring and environmental protection; natural and cultural resources; housing and social services; and international relations.

What is the sequester?

The Budget Control Act of 2011 established caps on discretionary spending over 10 years, resulting in \$1 trillion in cuts spread across defense and NDD programs. The law also directed a congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to identify an additional \$1.2 trillion in budgetary savings over ten years. The failure of the bi-partisan "super committee" to come to an agreement on a deficit reduction plan triggered a "sequester" to take effect on January 2, 2013. To sequester means to set apart or to take something away until a debt has been repaid. In the context of funding federal programs, sequester means imminent, across-the-board cuts to most programs, both defense and nondefense-in addition to the \$1 trillion in cuts already sustained through the Budget Control Act's discretionary caps. There are a few discretionary programs that are exempt from the sequester in the first year, such as Pell grants. Some mandatory programs (e.g., Medicaid) are also exempt from the sequester.



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How will the sequester impact NDD programs?

In 2013, the sequester will mean an automatic 8 to 9 percent cut to funding levels in 2013 for most NDD programs, including USDA, NSF, and DOE research programs. Cuts of this level will be devastating to the research infrastructure.

