

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Brian Stone
Chief of Staff, Performing the duties of the NSF Director
National Science Foundation
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear President Trump and Mr. Stone,

We write with serious concern regarding news last month that you dismissed all members of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) National Science Board (NSB), the advisory board that governs the agency. According to news reports, the 22 NSB members received an email on April 24, 2026, notifying them without explanation that their positions on the NSB were "terminated, effective immediately."¹ This mass firing of NSB members is unprecedented, yet follows a pattern under this administration of terminating medical and scientific advisors, including the NSF's outside advisory committees² and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices.³

Congress established the NSF and the NSB in the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, creating the NSF as an independent agency and tasking the NSB and the NSF Director to jointly govern the agency.⁴ The NSB is specifically tasked with establishing the agency's policies, including identifying issues critical to the NSF's future, approving the NSF's budget, and approving new NSF programs and awards.⁵ In addition, the NSB is tasked with serving as an independent body of advisors for the President and Congress on national science and engineering policy.⁶ Members of the NSB are appointed by the President and serve staggered six-year terms,

¹ Dan Garisto, *Entire NSF science advisory board fired by Trump administration*, Nature (April 26, 2026), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-01361-7>.

² Jeffrey Mervis, *NSF scraps most outside advisory panels*, ScienceInsider (April 15, 2025), <https://www.science.org/content/article/nsf-scraps-most-outside-advisory-panels>.

³ Melissa Jenco, *AAP 'deeply troubled and alarmed' by ousting of CDC vaccine advisory committee*, AAP News (June 9, 2025), <https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/32371>.

⁴ National Science Foundation Act of 1950, Pub. L. 81-507, 64 Stat. 149 (May 10, 1950).

⁵ *About the NSB*, National Science Foundation (accesses April 27, 2026), <https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/about>.

⁶ *Id.*

with one-third of the board appointed every two years to provide continuity across administrations and shield the NSB from political interference.⁷

This is yet another attack in this administration's relentless war on science, forcing an agency into crisis. NSF now lacks a board, a permanent director, and a deputy director.⁸ The agency has also lost more than 30 percent of its staff since January 2025 due to the administration's reckless mass terminations.⁹ In addition, the NSF terminated hundreds of active research awards and has been issuing new awards at the slowest pace in at least 35 years.¹⁰

The timing of the NSB terminations also raises significant suspicion of the motivation for the firings. The board was next scheduled to meet on May 5, 2026, and reporting indicates that a report on the United States ceding scientific ground to China was set to be released as part of the meeting¹¹—a report Congress urgently needs as experts and recent forecasts indicate that our country's scientific and innovation leadership is at risk due to this administration's actions undermining research.¹² The administration has already proposed cutting NSF's budget by more than half for two consecutive fiscal years.¹³ Last year, after the White House published its proposed budget and staffing cuts, former NSB Chairs and NSF Directors wrote to members of Congress strongly opposing this administration's cuts writing: “[the proposed cuts] would thwart scientific progress, decimate the research workforce, and take a decade or more to recover.”¹⁴ Congress, correctly, responded by rejecting the proposed cuts. Yet the administration has once again sought to wreck NSF funding, proposing to cut the agency's budget from \$8.75 billion in fiscal year 2026 to \$3.96 billion in fiscal year 2027.¹⁵

⁷ *About the NSB*, National Science Foundation (accesses April 27, 2026), <https://www.nsf.gov/nsb/about>.

⁸ Dan Garisto, *Entire NSF science advisory board fired by Trump administration*, Nature (April 26, 2026), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-01361-7>.

⁹ Robin Bravender, *Science agency cuts senior career jobs*, E&E News (July 29, 2025), <https://www.eenews.net/articles/science-agency-cuts-senior-career-jobs/>.

¹⁰ Adam Sella, *Trump Fires Board Members of Group That Oversees U.S. Science Funding*, New York Times (April 25, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/25/us/politics/trump-fires-board-members-scientific-research-group.html>.

¹¹ Dan Garisto, *Entire NSF science advisory board fired by Trump administration*, Nature (April 26, 2026), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-01361-7>.

¹² See Ben Deighton, *China could be the world's biggest public funder of science within two years*, Nature (March 19, 2026), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-00618-5>. See also L. Rafael Reif, *America Is Losing the Innovation Race: Why the Future of Science Might Be Chinese*, Foreign Affairs (April 1, 2026), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/america-losing-innovation-race>.

¹³ See *Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request to Congress*, NSF (May 30, 2025), <https://nsf.gov-resources.nsf.gov/files/00-NSF-FY26-CJ-Entire-Rollup.pdf>; and *Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request to Congress*, NSF (April 3, 2026), <https://nsf.gov-resources.nsf.gov/files/FY-2027-NSF-Budget-Request-to-Congress.pdf>.

¹⁴ Former NSB Chairs and NSF Directors Letter to House and Senate Appropriator, Association of American Universities (May 5, 2025), <https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/former-nsb-chairs-and-nsf-directors-letter-house-and-senate-appropriators>.

¹⁵ *Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request to Congress*, NSF (April 3, 2026), <https://nsf.gov-resources.nsf.gov/files/FY-2027-NSF-Budget-Request-to-Congress.pdf>.

We are also greatly concerned by political interference by the White House over this independent agency. Terminated NSB members have stated that OMB instructed NSF leadership not to share details of the agency's budget plans with the full board, despite the NSB's statutorily mandated role in approving NSF's spending.¹⁶ With the NSB now entirely vacated, there is no independent check on OMB's influence, if not control, over NSF grant-making, strategic direction, and spending priorities. As one former board member warned, NSF could "essentially become a pass-through for implementing things in the domain of sciences and technology that the administration just wants to do."¹⁷

We request that you provide the following information in writing no later than **May 29, 2026**:

1. The legal and constitutional basis for your termination of all NSB members on April 24, 2026, including the specific statutory or constitutional provision relied upon, the legal analysis supporting that reading, and any written legal opinion or guidance prepared by the Department of Justice, the White House Counsel's Office, or NSF's own general counsel in connection with this action.
2. How NSF will perform the NSB's statutory functions—including approval of major awards and expenditures, establishment of NSF policies, and provision of advice to the President and Congress—during any period in which there is no functioning board. Please identify who, if anyone, currently has authority to approve major NSF awards and expenditures in the NSB's absence.
3. Whether President Trump intends to appoint new NSB members and, if so, by what timeline. If President Trump does not intend to appoint new members until Congress amends the National Science Foundation Act, please explain what statutory changes the administration believes are required.
4. Communications between OMB, the White House, or any other Executive Office of the President and NSF leadership—from January 20, 2025, to the present—directing NSF not to share budget, grant-making, or strategic planning information with NSB members.
5. What steps NSF has taken, or plans to take, to ensure that the mandated report on the state of science and engineering in the United States—including the forthcoming report on United States' scientific competitiveness relative to China—is completed and transmitted to Congress in accordance with the agency's statutory obligations.

The NSB was established by Congress because this nation's investment in basic scientific research requires independent, expert oversight that transcends election cycles. Dismissing the full NSB without explanation, without replacement, and without plans to ensure continuity of the Board's work is an assault on both the independence of American science and the rule of law. As

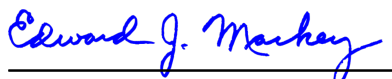
¹⁶ Ryan Quinn, *Board Ouster Raises Further Concerns About NSF's Future*, Inside Higher Ed (Apr. 27, 2026), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2026/04/27/board-ouster-raises-further-concerns-about-nsfs>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

our competitors race to surpass us in science and technology, the United States cannot afford to hand them an advantage by destroying the very institutions that have made us the global leader in research and discovery.

We look forward to your prompt and complete response.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



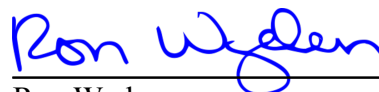
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



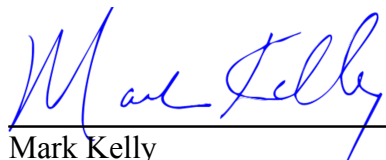
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



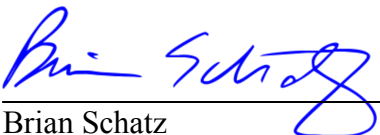
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator