



Office of Government Affairs
444 N. Capitol St., NW, Ste. 351
Washington, D.C. 20001

April 24, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

On behalf of Princeton University, I am writing to express strong support for the “Fusion Energy” (Section 506) provision of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act (H.R. 1806). Princeton is proud to manage the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL), a Department of Energy National Laboratory that specializes in fusion energy and plasma physics research. Section 506, as amended during full committee markup with broad bipartisan support, lays out a positive path forward for the United States’ fusion energy program, both through the domestic research and facilities program and through participation in the international ITER project.

As you know, fusion power will be a safe, clean, and sustainable energy source that can provide the United States with energy independence and a nearly limitless energy supply. Research into fusion energy and plasma science – another key component of the fusion research program – has resulted in many interim spinoffs and provided immediate scientific benefits in areas such as astronomy, national security, and even food safety. We are pleased that this amendment acknowledges the many contributions of fusion energy research and provides direction for further program development and additional breakthroughs.

We also strongly endorse the amendment’s language that would allow for fairness in competition for international project solicitations. In the past several years, PPPL has been hindered in its ability to capitalize on its competitive strength in the area of physics scenario modeling because of a Code of Federal Regulations provision stating that national laboratories are not allowed to compete with private industry. While this makes sense domestically – so laboratories do not take business away from U.S. companies, or even international companies with locations in the U.S. – it does not make sense when the only other applicants for the contract are foreign entities. The language in this amendment will address the unintended - and adverse - consequence of this clause and allow national laboratories to compete, when appropriate, with foreign national laboratories and foreign private companies based in countries such as Russia and China.

Thank you for your efforts on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Joyce A. Rechtschaffen
Director

cc The Honorable Alan Grayson
 The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
 The Honorable Randy Weber