



CRA
Computing Research
Association

April 21, 2015

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

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson,

As an organization representing over 200 PhD-granting departments in computing, 16 industrial computing research labs, and 6 affiliated computing societies, we commend you both on your long-standing efforts to support the Federal investment in fundamental computing research. While we are pleased to see elements of that support continue in the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015 (H.R. 1806), other concerns – including the overall level of support provided to key science agencies in the act – prevent us from offering our endorsement of the bill.

In particular, we are disappointed to note that the bill, by flat-funding science agencies in the second year of authorizations, fails to provide for steady and real growth in the Federal investment in research, something we believe is critical to our Nation's ability to compete, prosper and be secure in the coming years and decades. Indeed, when inflation is considered, the authorizations for FY 2017 represent real reductions in research investments, including investments in computing research.

We are also disappointed to note that research at the National Science Foundation in the Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) sciences, along with the Geosciences, would be curtailed under this authorization. As you are aware, research in several key areas of computing – including cyber security and human-computer interaction (HCI) – is significantly informed by work emanating from the SBE directorate. The insight into human behaviors provided by SBE-funded work is critical to understanding how best to design and implement hardware and software systems that are more secure and easier to use. In cyber security work, where the human is often the weakest link in the chain, it is especially crucial to understand the varying motivations and usage patterns that dictate how people interact with their machines, and the expertise in studying those issues in large part resides in the social, behavioral and economic sciences. In HCI work, expertise in social, behavioral and economic sciences is critically valuable in creating workplace systems that foster collaboration and creativity, creating disaster response systems that influence people to effectively find shelter and assistance, and creating systems that motivate medical adherence and compliance with medical treatment.

We would be happy to work with you and your staff to help address these concerns and create legislation we could support wholeheartedly. However, as the act stands, we are unable to offer our endorsement.

Sincerely,

J Strother Moore
Chair