

An analysis of public policy issues and how they affect MRS members and the materials community...

# Joint Society Statement Urges Federal Support for Scientific Research

The Materials Research Society was a key participant in the drive to support a joint professional society statement on the importance of sustained federal support for scientific research. Eight societies (American Astronomical Society, American Chemical Society, American Geological Institute, Astronomical Society of the Pacific, American Mathematical Society, American Physical Society, Materials Research Society, and Optical Society of America) formed the nucleus of the group of 41 (representing more than 1.5 million scientists and engineers) that ultimately signed the following document. This statement was released at a press conference on Tuesday, March 4 in Washington, DC. MRS President Robert Hull was at that well-attended press conference along with the presidents or representatives of many of the other signatories.

The joining of so many technical societies representing the physical sciences to support a common goal is unprecedented. MRS has been not only a participant but also a member of the original group that had the vision and dedication to make this happen.

As the federal government develops its spending plans for Fiscal Year 1998, we call upon the President and Members of Congress to renew the nation's historical commitment to scientific research and education by providing the requisite funding for the federal agencies charged with these responsibilities. Our call is based upon two fundamental principles that are well accepted by policy makers in both parties.

- The federal investment in scientific research is vital to four national goals: our economic competitiveness, our medical health, our national security and our quality of life.
- Scientific disciplines are interdependent; therefore, a comprehensive approach to

science funding provides the greatest opportunity for reaching these goals.

We strongly believe that for our nation to meet the challenges of the next century, agencies charged with carrying out scientific research and education require increases in their respective research budgets in the range of 7 percent for Fiscal Year 1998. These agencies include, among others, the NSF, NIH, DOE, DOD, and NASA. The increases we call for strike a balance between the current fiscal pressures and the need to invest in activities that enable long-term economic growth and productivity. Such increases would only partially restore the inflationary losses that most of these agencies suffered during the last few years.

Prudent planning argues for strengthening the respective activities of major research agencies, as already recognized in pending legislation. To constrain still further federal spending on their scientific programs would jeopardize the future well-being of our nation.

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[Editor's Note: NSF - National Science Foundation; NIH - National Institutes of Health; DOE - Department of Energy; DOD - Department of Defense; NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration.]

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