

Materials Voice: MRS Web Site Facilitates Congressional Communication

MRS Members Urged to Make Science Policy Concerns Known to Legislators through Web-Based Letter-Writing Software



The Materials Research Society is enabling members to effectively and easily communicate with Congress through a congressional letter-writing feature available on the MRS Web site. The feature is

designed to help MRS members deliver their message to legislators on U.S. public policy issues affecting materials research and education. Called *Materials Voice*, the site is located at www.mrs.org/pa/materialsvoice and is maintained by the MRS Government Affairs Committee.

Public policy decisions have a critical impact on progress in the physical sciences and science education. In the current economic climate, it is particularly important for the materials community to help legislators understand why support of the sciences is necessary for a strong economy, national security, and quality of life. MRS members can make a difference by

helping legislators shape policy based on sound science and by ensuring that the implications of public policy decisions on materials research are understood.

Issues identified by MRS as having the highest priority are research and development (R&D) funding and international exchange. The anticipated doubling of funding for the National Science Foundation by 2007 is currently off-track, and basic research within the Departments of Defense and Energy are also under-funded. Visa restrictions are constraining non-U.S. visiting scientists and students from participating in scientific exchange within the United States.

The MRS Government Affairs Committee encourages all members to take an active role in science policymaking and has provided *Materials Voice* to make such communication with elected officials easy. MRS members can comment on the issues posted on the site or send messages on other science policy issues that are of concern to them.

MRS will use *Materials Voice* to post background materials and sample letters on a range of current policy issues; MRS members can regularly monitor the site for important issues and thus take immediate action. The site identifies individual members of the U.S. House and Senate, including both local and Washington, D.C. office addresses and e-mail information. Links to the home pages of respective representatives and senators enable constituents to monitor their legislators' activities.

Computers with *Materials Voice* access will be available during part of the 2004 MRS Fall Meeting in Boston, on November 29–December 1. Volunteers will be available to assist members who wish to make use of the software.

The Government Affairs Committee welcomes input from the membership on topics to pursue.

JOE MIRAGLIOTTA
MRS Government Affairs Committee

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