An Open Letter to
The President
The Speaker of the House
The Minority Leader, House of Representatives
The Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Minority Leader, United States Senate

January 29, 2008

As members of the climate, weather and hydrologic communities, we are writing to express our extreme disappointment with recent decisions made in Washington that adversely impact the health of the Nation’s research enterprise, global competitiveness, environmental health, and national and economic security. After months of bipartisan rhetoric about the importance of investing in our Nation’s research enterprise, the Congress passed and the President signed into law an FY08 budget that will result in a dramatic decline in federal research and development from earlier Administration and Congressional plans. We believe this fails to prepare the Nation to meet the challenges laid out in the National Academy of Sciences landmark report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm.*

Under the FY08 budget, federal funding for basic and applied research will decline in real terms for the fourth year in a row. And several key R&D agencies’ research programs — such as the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration — will lose ground to inflation. The talk about the need to increase research funding to strengthen innovation and improve our international competitiveness appears to be an empty gesture.

The President and a bipartisan Congress, by enacting the America COMPETES Act last year, laid out a bold path toward revitalizing basic research in this country. COMPETES was a welcome Congressional initiative to double funding for America’s science programs and expand science education that complemented the President’s American Competitiveness Initiative and the Democratic Innovation Agenda. Unfortunately, the FY 2008 Omnibus Appropriations Act does not deliver on the promises contained in these important initiatives.

Moreover, the FY 2008 budget is likely to result in cancellations and significant staff reductions at major national research laboratories, reductions in climate and weather research in U.S. universities just weeks after the international climate change conference in Bali, delays in the acquisition of advanced computing capabilities needed for better weather and climate predictions, and reductions in support necessary to educate and train the next generation of geoscientists.

We call on the Administration and the Congress to reconsider these budget decisions and enact a supplemental appropriation that includes support for the bipartisan competitiveness and innovation agenda.

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