December 9, 2008

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair, Commerce, Justice, Science
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chair, Commerce, Justice, Science
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member, Commerce, Justice, Science
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member, Commerce, Justice, Science
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Mollohan, and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

On behalf of the atmospheric sciences research community, we urge you to support the highest possible funding levels for federal science agencies in the final FY 2009 Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill. In addition, the atmospheric community is hopeful that the FY 2009 appropriations process will be finished early in January 2009, as much of our research and operational budgets are dependent on the continuation of federal funding and reasonable increases that will allow us to advance the nation’s science agenda.

Within the Commerce, Justice, Science funding bill the community urges Congress to include:

- $6.85 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), included in both the House and Senate marks;
- $4.52 billion, included in the Senate mark for the NASA Science Mission Directorate; and
- $4.45 billion for NOAA, which was included in the Senate mark.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF)
We are pleased that both the House and the Senate included $6.85 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2009. Within NSF, we urge the conferees to include the higher Senate number of $5.59 million for Research and Related Activities (R&RA) in the final FY 2009 bill. In addition, atmospheric sciences research in this country depends on funding within the Geosciences Directorate. Therefore we urge the highest possible funding for this directorate and the Atmospheric Sciences Division, which provides resources for work that is critical to the safety of our people, our economic health, and global issues of national security such as severe weather hazards, climate change, the security of our communications infrastructure, and the environmental health of the planet.
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)
We urge the conferees to support the $4.52 billion included in the Senate mark for the Science Mission Directorate (SMD). With climate change occurring more rapidly than expected, there are few NASA responsibilities more important than observing the Earth’s environment. We are pleased that both the House and the Senate mark include a programmatic increase above the budget request for Earth Science within SMD to accelerate the implementation of the Earth sciences decadal survey missions in development.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)
We urge the conferees to support the higher Senate number of $4.45 billion for NOAA, and within the agency, support the Senate number of $403.4 million for the Office of Atmospheric Research (OAR) and increased funding for the Competitive Research Program within OAR. An increase to the Competitive Research Program will support climate and weather research related activities of great importance to the country and enable OAR to leverage and work more effectively with the enormous base of expertise in the academic community.

Thank you for your support of basic research funding. For further details, we draw your attention to the FY 2009 priorities included in testimony to the House Committee on Appropriations earlier this year: http://www.ucar.edu/oga/pdf/FY09_CJS_Testimony.pdf. Please feel free to contact Dr. Richard Anthes, the president of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research with any questions.

Signed* by:

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