January 4, 2007

Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Obey and Chairman Byrd:

As the 110th Congress convenes to complete the FY 2007 appropriations process, the Members of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) Board of Trustees urge the Congress to ensure that the year-long continuing resolution for fiscal year 2007 provides the budget growth proposed for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Department of Energy – as well as ensure that other vital R&D agencies – including NASA’s earth and space sciences activities and NOAA’s ocean and atmospheric research programs – are accorded similar priority support.

Of particular concern to the UCAR Board of Trustees is the health and vitality of the geosciences supported by NSF, NASA and NOAA. The geosciences, which include the atmospheric, earth, and ocean sciences, address the need to understand, predict, and respond to environmental events and changes to use Earth’s resources wisely. Research in the geosciences advances scientific knowledge of finite resources such as water, energy, minerals, and biological diversity. The geosciences advance our ability to predict natural phenomena of economic and human significance, such as climate change, weather, earthquakes, fish-stock fluctuations, and disruptive events in the solar-terrestrial environment. NSF is the principal source of federal funding for university-based fundamental research in the geosciences and its vitality is particularly critical to the global competitiveness and environmental health of this country.

The UCAR Board of Trustees is concerned that if the year-long continuing resolution limits the funding of these agencies-- and their geosciences-related programs -- to FY 2006 levels or lower, enormous damage will be done to the nation’s scientific and technological enterprise. In addition to damage it would have on the operations and staffing of many important projects and our world-class research institutions, it would send the worst possible message to young people about the value and importance of science and science education – and to the rest of the world concerning our recognition as a nation of the value of science to human welfare and progress.
The recent statement regarding the year long continuing resolution said, “We will do our best to make whatever limited adjustments are possible within the confines of the Republican budget to address the nation's most important policy concerns.” The UCAR Board of Trustees contends that investing in the future – in the workforce of tomorrow and the creation of new knowledge through geosciences research and education – should be considered as one of “the nation’s most important policy concerns.” We urge you to do all you can to fully fund, at proposed 2007 Senate levels, the research and education activities of the NSF, the Department of Energy, NASA, and NOAA in the forthcoming year-long continuing resolution.

We thank you for the opportunity to convey these views.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Anthes
President
UCAR

Kelvin Droegemeier
Chairman
UCAR Board of Trustees

cc: Honorable Jerry Lewis
    Honorable Thad Cochran
    Honorable Bart Gordon
    Honorable Ralph Hall
    Honorable Edward Kennedy
    Honorable Michael Enzi
    Honorable Daniel Inouye
    Honorable Ted Stevens