

[H.R. 3293, Scientific Research in the National Interest Act](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Wednesday, February 10, 2016, the House will likely begin consideration of [H.R. 3293](#), the Scientific Research in the National Interest Act, under a rule. H.R. 3293 was introduced on July 29, 2015 by Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), and was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which ordered the bill reported by voice vote on October 8, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 3293 requires the National Science Foundation (NSF) to make a public announcement of each grant it awards with a non-technical explanation of the project's scientific merits and an explanation of how the research will advance the national interest, in an attempt to provide for greater accountability in Federal funding for scientific research. Under the bill, examples of advancing the national interest include increasing economic competitiveness, advancing the health and welfare of the public, or supporting the national defense of the United States.

BACKGROUND

The National Science Foundation (NSF) supports both basic research and education in the non-medical sciences and engineering. Congress established the foundation in 1950 and directed it to "promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense; and for other purposes." The NSF is a major source of federal support for U.S. university research, especially in certain fields such as mathematics and computer science. It is also responsible for significant shares of the federal science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education program portfolio and federal STEM student aid and support.¹

Recently, the House Science Committee has expressed concern that "the NSF has approved a number of grants for which the scientific merits and national interest are questionable, or at least not obvious. The NSF has recognized the need for increased transparency and accountability and in January 2015 established a policy requiring clear, non-technical explanations of each research grant

¹ See CRS Report, ["The National Science Foundation: FY2016 Budget Request and Funding History,"](#) August 28, 2015.

and an explanation of how it supports the national interest. H.R. 3293 makes that commitment permanent and explicit.”²

According to the bill sponsor, “America’s future economic growth and national security depend on innovation. Public and private investments in research and development fuel the economy, create jobs and lead to new technologies that benefit Americans’ daily lives. But to remain a world leader, we must ensure that our investments fund the highest quality basic research. Unfortunately, in recent years, the federal government has awarded too many grants that few Americans would consider to be in the national interest. This legislation requires the NSF explain in writing and in non-technical language how each research grant awarded supports the national interest. This will add transparency, accountability and credibility to the NSF and its grant process, which will help the NSF earn the public’s support.”³

The text of H.R. 3293, was included as Section 106 of [H.R. 1806](#), the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015, which passed the House by a vote of [217 to 205](#), on May 20, 2015.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) enacting H.R. 3293 would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [John Huston](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 6-5539.

² See [House Report 114-412](#) at 2.

³ See Science, Space, & Technology Press Release, [“Dyslexia Research, National Interest Bills Pass Committee with Bipartisan Support.”](#) October 8, 2015.