

15 September 2017

The Honorable Richard Perry  
Secretary of Energy  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20585

Dear Secretary Perry,

On behalf of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), whose mission is to promote discovery in Earth and space science for the benefit of humanity, and its 60,000 members, I am writing to express my concern regarding recent reports that the Department of Energy (DOE) is taking steps to reduce its federal workforce. AGU is especially concerned about the loss of scientific and technical expertise and the reduction in programs at DOE that are essential to our nation's economy and our workforce.

Federal investment in science and innovation programs, and the trained technical workforce needed to carry them out, stimulates jobs, fortifies our communities, and strengthens our nation's security. DOE's science programs and its scientific staff provide solutions to many of today's most pressing issues and future challenges, such as ensuring that we have abundant, clean sources of energy. Moreover, many of these programs—such as the ARPA-E program—conduct research that is simply too speculative or risky for the private sector to pick up.

On 13 March 2017, the President issued Executive Order 13781<sup>1</sup> instructing federal agencies to submit a plan for workforce reductions. In response, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued Memorandum (M-17-22)<sup>2</sup>, "Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Order 13781: Presidential Executive Order on a Comprehensive Plan for Reorganizing the Executive Branch [www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/13/presidential-executive-order-comprehensive-plan-reorganizing-executive](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/13/presidential-executive-order-comprehensive-plan-reorganizing-executive)) 13 March 2017

<sup>2</sup> Office of Management and Budget (OMB), [Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies: Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce](#)

Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce" on 12 April 2017, providing additional guidance to agencies. The memo indicates that federal agencies should "begin taking immediate actions to achieve near-term workforce reductions and cost savings, including planning for funding levels in the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Budget Blueprint," which proposed significant cuts to federal science agencies.

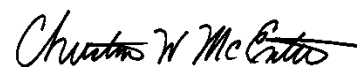
Additionally, the OMB memo directs agencies to submit to OMB in September, as part of the agencies' FY2019 budget proposal, an "Agency Reform Plan" that includes long-term workforce reductions. According to the memo, the plan should ensure that the federal government is delivering programs that "are the highest needs to citizens and where there is a unique Federal role" and "[a]lign the workforce to meet the needs of today and the future."

We have also seen reports<sup>3</sup> indicating that DOE has approved plans to reduce the workforce at national laboratories, specifically Oak Ridge National Laboratory<sup>4</sup> and Brookhaven National Laboratory, by about 525 positions through voluntary, and potentially involuntary, separations.

While the President's FY2018 budget<sup>5</sup> outlines proposed cuts to federal science programs, including a reduction in workforce, it is the power of Congress to determine and set appropriations levels for our nation's federal science agencies. Therefore, we urge you to discontinue making such final decisions regarding the workforce at the DOE unless Congress provides directives accordingly through the final appropriations bills it negotiates and passes. We also urge you to preserve the scientific workforce at DOE in the FY2019 budget process and to recognize it as a vital contributor to American well-being.

I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you further about this important issue. AGU stands ready to work with you to ensure that the DOE continues to be an innovation leader, and that America continues to realize the benefits of our nation's scientific enterprise.

Sincerely,



Christine McEntee  
Executive Director/CEO  
American Geophysical Union

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(available at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/memoranda/2017/M-17-22.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/memoranda/2017/M-17-22.pdf)) 12 April 2017

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, Christa "National labs to cut more than 500 jobs" E&E News (available at [www.eenews.net/stories/1060058591](http://www.eenews.net/stories/1060058591)) 9 August 2017

<sup>4</sup> Email reported by E&E News (available at [www.eenews.net/assets/2017/08/09/document\\_gw\\_04.pdf](http://www.eenews.net/assets/2017/08/09/document_gw_04.pdf)) 9 August 2017

<sup>5</sup> Office of Management and Budget, [America First: A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018_blueprint.pdf), (available at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018\\_blueprint.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/2018_blueprint.pdf)) 16 March 2017