

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

October 8, 2009

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Coburn amendment 2631 to H.R. 2846

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the higher education associations listed below, I write in opposition to amendment 2631, offered by Senator Coburn, to H.R. 2846, the FY 2010 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

The Coburn amendment would prohibit the National Science Foundation (NSF) from funding any research in the field of political science. This amendment represents an unwarranted intrusion into research funding decisions made through the well-established peer-review process.

NSF is an independent agency that provides support for peer-reviewed and competitively selected awards. While NSF is best known for its support of physical science, computer science and engineering, it also has a long history of supporting funding for social sciences as part of its mission. Furthermore, only projects – whether in the physical or social sciences – that pass NSF's exceedingly rigorous standards of peer-review are funded. This process of review has served NSF and the nation well throughout its history.

Given that 95 percent of the funding for political science comes from NSF, passage of this amendment would essentially decimate the study and research of political science in this country. The political analysis garnered from the grants supported by NSF has provided scientists and policy makers with a wealth of information concerning societal, cultural and economic issues. Moreover, the political and cultural analysis derived from NSF-supported grants has proven to be invaluable to our national security, as evidenced by the joint NSF-Department of Defense Minerva project.

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We urge you to oppose the Coburn amendment should it be offered to the pending legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Molly C. Broad".

Molly Corbett Broad
President

MCB/lw

On behalf of:

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

American Association of Community Colleges

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Council on Education

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

Association of American Universities

Association of Public and Land-grant Universities

Council of Graduate Schools

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities