

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

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April 25, 2013

Dr. Cora B. Marrett  
Acting Director  
National Science Foundation  
4201 Wilson Blvd  
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Marrett,

Last week, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a hearing to review the President's budget request for science agencies for fiscal year 2014, which you attended. Testifying at the hearing was Dr. John Holdren, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. During the course of the hearing, I asked Dr. Holdren about taxpayer funding for social, behavioral and political science studies at the National Science Foundation (NSF), and how we can better prioritize research spending. During that discussion, Dr. Holdren said that there is "room for improvement" in how NSF prioritizes research initiatives based on the potential value to the national interest.

Based on my review of NSF-funded studies, I have concerns regarding some grants approved by the Foundation and how closely they adhere to NSF's "intellectual merit" guideline. To better understand how NSF makes decisions to approve and fund grants, it would be helpful to obtain detailed information on specific research projects awarded NSF grants.

According to NSF procurement guidelines, the Foundation first conducts a scientific/technical review of each grant proposal and then the NSF Program Officer writes an evaluation about whether or not to fund a given proposal. Members of the Committee would benefit from access to the scientific/technical reviews and the Program Officers Review Analysis for the following research projects that have been awarded NSF funding:

1. Award Abstract #1247824: "*Picturing Animals in National Geographic, 1888-2008*," March 15, 2013, (\$227,437);
2. Award Abstract #1230911: "*Comparative Histories of Scientific Conservation: Nature, Science, and Society in Patagonian and Amazonian South America*," September 1, 2012 (\$195,761);

Dr. Marrett  
April 25, 2013  
Page Two

3. Award Abstract #1230365: "*The International Criminal Court and the Pursuit of Justice*," August 15, 2012 (\$260,001);
4. Award Abstract #1226483, "*Comparative Network Analysis: Mapping Global Social Interactions*," August 15, 2012, (\$435,000); and
5. Award Abstract #1157551: "*Regulating Accountability and Transparency in China's Dairy Industry*," June 1, 2012 (\$152,464).

These are a few examples of recent NSF-funded studies of interest to Members of the Committee. I would appreciate it if you could provide the information I seek within two weeks of receipt of this letter. If you have any questions, please feel free to have your staff contact Raj Bharwani or Richard Yamada at (202) 225-6371.

Sincerely,



Lamar S. Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space,  
and Technology

cc:

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space,  
and Technology