November 30, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
230 U.S. Capitol Building (Senate)
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
419 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan
232 U.S. Capitol Building (House)
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
204 U.S. Capitol Building (House)
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leaders McConnell, Schumer, and Pelosi:

On behalf of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership (COL), which represents our nation’s leading ocean science, research, and technology organizations from academia, industry, and aquaria, I want to thank you for your work on fiscal year (FY) 2019 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations. As you continue with the process, on behalf of COL, I respectfully request robust funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

I am in agreement with the recommendation from *Innovation: An American Imperative* (a call to action signed by more than 500 industry, higher education, science, and engineering leaders) that suggests at least a four percent annual funding increase to ensure our nation remains strong and competitive in science and innovation. While I support this recommendation, I also understand the intricacies of the budget process (including planned decreases at NOAA due to weather satellites entering the operational phase), so to be as in line with this increase as possible (NSF and NASA topline numbers fall just shy of four percent growth), I respectfully request you fund each agency at no less than the highest level provided in the House and Senate appropriations bills.

Ocean science and technology form the foundation for a strong and secure nation. The idea that our nation’s securities – national, homeland, economic, energy, food, and water – are dependent on a healthy and prosperous ocean (which in turn depends on ocean science and technology) is a concept I refer to as “ocean security.” Ocean science and technology aid in naval undersea warfare, allow us to predict hurricanes, ensure world-class fisheries management, help us make new discoveries about the planet on which we live, and much more. Investments in ocean science and technology are critical to our ocean security and the safety, competitiveness, and stability of our nation. As you look to provide spending levels and policy direction to NSF, NOAA, and NASA, I request you also consider the following programs and directives within each agency.

**National Science Foundation (NSF)**

Thank you for appropriations bills that increase funding for NSF “to promote...
the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; [and] to secure the national defense.” I encourage the committee to fund the agency no lower than the $8.2 billion included in the House bill.

Additionally, the inclusion of funding for regional class research vessels (in both reports) and language in the Senate report on marine seismic research that recognizes the importance of ensuring the availability of “NSF-funded marine research vessels with unique capabilities” are critical, not only to our ocean security, but to NSF’s ability to carry out the eight priority science questions laid out in the National Research Council’s report Sea Change: 2015-2025 Decadal Survey of Ocean Sciences. Answering these questions will provide us with more information across a breadth of issues, increasing our understanding about the impacts of pollutants, sustainable use of coastal zones, how ocean changes will impact hurricanes, risk associated with geohazards like tsunamis, and how subseafloor processes and products could be used.

**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**

As our nation deals with the impacts of hurricanes, droughts, fires, and other natural disasters, the role of NOAA in monitoring and forecasting weather and ocean conditions becomes ever more important. But NOAA does more than predict the weather and ocean, and I thank you for recognizing that and providing funding for key programs slated for elimination in the president’s budget request, including the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Coastal Zone Management Grants, and the Office of Education. I request that the final bill include no less than the $5.5 billion included in the Senate bill and that the agency’s climate research programs be adequately funded.

There are two items of importance I’d like to highlight in Senate report language that strengthen our ocean security. First, the Senate report provides $8 million for the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP). NOPP facilitates much-needed partnerships between federal agencies, academia, and industry and has funded over 200 projects since its creation in 1997, addressing topics from economic development to national security. Additionally, the Senate provides $15 million for the National Marine Fisheries Service’s aquaculture program, which will play an increasingly important role in expanding domestic seafood production and reducing our reliance on imports to feed our nation, thus ensuring our food security. An important way to advance sound, sustainable aquaculture in offshore U.S. waters is through pilot projects; language directing the continuation of regional pilot programs that advance partnerships between the seafood industry and the community will ensure aquaculture is an economically beneficial and environmentally sustainable venture.

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)**

NASA plays a key role, not just in understanding what is beyond our planet, but in understanding our own planet’s interconnected systems, which is critical to our very survival. Thank you for the increase in funding to the Science Mission Directorate provided in both appropriations bills. To ensure the agency balances its space missions with its Earth ones, I request NASA’s Earth Science Division be funded at no less than the $1.93 billion provided in the Senate bill.

I also request funding for projects that help monitor Earth’s climate, including the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission; the Landsat 9 mission; the Climate Absolute Radiance and Refractivity Observatory Pathfinder mission; and Orbiting Carbon Observatory 3 mission help us understand our ocean and Earth. For example, satellite observations of the ocean, atmospheric aerosols, and clouds collected during the PACE mission will deliver economic and societal benefits, including in
areas of fisheries productivity and coastal health. Understanding topics such as these ensure our food security and economic stability; yet another example of how ocean science underpins and strengthens our ocean security.

In closing, I respectfully request that in the final appropriations bill for FY 2019, you fund each agency at no less than the highest level provided in the House and Senate appropriations bills, although at least a four percent annual increase would be preferable to ensure our strength and competitiveness in science and innovation. Investing in ocean science and technology will ensure our ocean security, keeping our ocean and our people healthy and our nation safe, secure, and economically competitive. COL, and the member institutions we represent, would be pleased to serve as a resource should you have questions or need any additional information.

Respectfully,

Jonathan W. White, RADM (Ret.), USN
President and CEO
Consortium for Ocean Leadership

Cc:
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Jerry Moran; Chairman; Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies; Committee on Appropriations; U.S. Senate
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen; Ranking Member; Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies; Committee on Appropriations; U.S. Senate
The Honorable John Culberson; Chairman; Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies; Committee on Appropriations; U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable José Serrano; Ranking Member; Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies; Committee on Appropriations; U.S. House of Representatives