

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2025

The Honorable Chris Wright
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

The Honorable Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Wright and Director Vought:

We write to request that you reverse budgetary decisions that are actively harming our national laboratories and work with Congress to ensure that the labs have the full staffing and resources they need to conduct their critical work. American technological, economic, and military superiority will be put at risk if our national labs are not operating at full strength. Yet unfortunately, these labs have already begun to initiate layoffs due to recent decisions by the Administration.

The work performed by our national labs – research enterprises that are the envy of the world – fuel American innovation and dominance in cutting-edge technological fields. The national labs also undertake vital national security projects that support the U.S. Department of Defense and other agencies that work to protect the safety and security of the American people. The work of the labs improves lives in a wide range of facets of American society.

For example, the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory uses the world's most powerful X-ray laser to enable scientists to uncover the 3-D molecular structure of proteins involved in the transmission of many diseases, such as African sleeping sickness, Dengue fever, and the Zika virus. It has also aided in the development of next-generation painkillers that seek to reduce side effects such as drug dependency. Lawrence Berkeley Lab developed the Interruption Cost Estimation (ICE) Calculator to provide economic cost estimates of power outages and grid improvements to help guide investments in grid reliability. Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos are working on the Source Physics Experiment to use seismic evidence to help detect when adversaries might try to surreptitiously develop nuclear weapons.

Moreover, AI and fusion energy are two key areas where America cannot afford to fall behind. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory is already using AI to advance the U.S.'s national security. This includes supporting the safe stewardship of the nuclear stockpile, defending against cybersecurity attacks, and identifying biosecurity and chemical threats. And under the umbrella of its national security work for the National Nuclear Security Administration, Lawrence Livermore achieved fusion ignition at the lab's National Ignition Facility in December 2022, demonstrating for the first time that humanity could produce more energy from fusion than the energy needed to drive the reaction. Further, at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory,

scientists are using AI to achieve discoveries in energy, chemistry, biology, and other areas that improve the daily lives of Americans.

Indeed, we believe the work of the national labs is instrumental in ensuring that the U.S. remains the global leader in the development of artificial intelligence models. Chinese companies like DeepSeek and Alibaba are racing to build large language models that seek to supplant American leadership in AI.¹ As you know, experts in the public and private sectors alike and public officials on both sides of the aisle believe there is tremendous benefit in being the first nation to establish clear global AI dominance.

Secretary Wright, in recent testimony before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, you recognized this reality, stating, “I’m actually very open to expanding the lab budget back a little bit from where the current proposal is,” and you emphasized the work the labs are doing in fields such as artificial intelligence and fusion energy. We agree that the expertise and research efforts of our national labs are invaluable to advancing these critical endeavors, and we were pleased to hear that you also believe that the President’s budget request does not sufficiently account for the critical the work at our national labs.

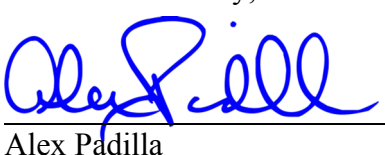
Further, as senior appropriators have pointed out, OMB and DOE have reprogrammed hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funding that was lawfully appropriated by Congress through enacted law.² This redirection of funding for purposes not designated by Congress is not permitted by law, and it is already having real-world effects on our national labs and the dedicated Americans who work there. Due to unlawful reprogramming and the prospect of budget cuts as proposed by the Administration’s budget request, labs have already started to lay off a significant number of dedicated employees. And national labs who have not yet begun layoffs have warned Congress that they may need to start laying off thousands of scientists and technical staff in the near future.

For the sake of America’s global leadership, we cannot afford to let this happen. The 17 national labs managed by the Department of Energy are the crown jewels of the nation's research and innovation ecosystem. We must ensure that they receive the recognition and resources they deserve. Thank you for working with us, and we welcome a conversation with you on this topic.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Science, Space, and
Technology

¹ *China Is Quickly Eroding America’s Lead in the Global AI Race*, <https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/artificial-intelligence-us-vs-china-03372176>

² <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/news/minority/murray-kaptur-blast-energy-departments-decision-to-steer-hundreds-of-millions-of-dollars-away-from-wind-solar-to-favored-industriesin-defiance-of-bipartisan-spending-bill>

cc: The Honorable John Kennedy
Chair, Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations and Subcommittee on Energy
and Water Development

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Chair, House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Mike Lee
Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chair, Senate Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Brian Babin
Chair, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Chair, House Committee on Armed Services

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member, House Committee on Armed Services