

August 14, 2004

Dr. Warren Washington, Chair
National Science Board
4201 Wilson Blvd., Ste 1225
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. Washington:

Thank you for your response concerning NSF non-compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act in the search for the new Assistant Director/Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences. I reserve all rights under FACA. However, at this point I think the best step is to request an opportunity to appear before the National Science Board as a witness at the confirmation hearings of the new AD/SBE after the nominee is chosen.

At this point, may I enter three brief comments for the record?

1.) A new period of two major historical changes

Our country and the world are in a new period of two fundamental historical changes. In both cases, the independent scientific assessment of the changing realities, and better theories and data systems to understand the changing structures and causal forces, will benefit the social sciences and our country. Before any new AD/SBE is confirmed, I believe that the National Science Board, the wider scientific community, and the public have an urgent need to know if he/she has plans for vigorous and effective leadership, and to review the nominee and the plans.

2.) Time series data and urgent requirements

As you review the management challenges, and urgent need for institutional reform, may I suggest an analogy? Assume that the shortfalls of results, and statistical data systems and controls, at the National Cancer Institute were the same as I and Dr. Reischauer have reviewed in past correspondence. By analogy, I think that you should act with the same speed and standards in economics and world politics as you would if you were Director of NIH with national oversight responsibility for cancer research.

And speed is important: as most members of the NSB are not economists, may I bring to your attention that new economic theories must be developed and tested by

quarterly data, with a single new observation available every three months? The inaction of the NSB and the advisory committees you have designated (e.g., the NAS/NRC committees) have cost us *more than four years* of vital observations of new and changing variables. And the record of your past leadership promises further delays, even after a new nominee is found and confirmed, before the NSB gets around to develop and implement corrective action and budget cycles are completed and the changes in the academic world can begin to produce research results (2005? 2006? 2007? 2008?). But new and better observation systems should be in place now: You must move faster.

3.) The erosions at government scientific agencies

- You and your colleagues on the NSB will have observed the sharp criticism of the (9/11) intelligence communities and the demands from Congress that anyone who has directed political pressures at professional analysts, or condoned such deterioration in quality and integrity, should be replaced. If you wish to apply a similar standard, I think that some members of the NSB may still be uninformed about the pressures and messages that have affected the National Academy of Sciences/ National Research Council professional staffs. Dr. Sue Woolsey, a former Democratic political appointee, who counseled their professional staffs to shut up about new data systems and statistical controls for new research in macro-economic policy, was the wife of a CIA Director. Knowing her past internal role and complicity in public evasion, Dr. Bruce Alberts promoted her to be the executive director at the NAS. And he gave Neil Smelser, who remained publicly silent, overall responsibility for the behavioral sciences. Institutions send messages to their staffs in different ways.

More recently, with the expansion of email, a copy of Dr. Robert Reischauer's sharply critical letter of NAS/NRC scientific failures/silences was circulated to all of the NAS/NRC professional staff (and, later, a copy of the Op Ed piece in the Financial Times by the President Lee Bollinger of Columbia, describing economics and political science as "solipsistic" and failing sciences), using an internal address intended for "community issue discussion". In response, Dr. Alberts terminated the "community discussion" address and also removed the online staff directories for both the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council - <http://www.nationalacademies.org/directories/#nas> (the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine directories remain online). It is a surprising and draconian response for any federal agency to take such a step to inhibit outside communication from members of the public. Dr. Reischauer, Dr. Bollinger, and I may be a bureaucratic annoyance but our goal is to improve the quality of the science concerning issues that are vital to the nation. The criticisms are legitimate and Dr. Alberts et al. have been on notice, since the early 1990s and the off-the-record meetings of the Carnegie Commission, that their institutional behavior does not have the support of distinguished leaders in government science policy.

You should know that every major criticism of scientific shortfalls received by the NSB or NSF over the past four years also was circulated via email to all profes-

sional staffs and advisory bodies at the NSF and at the NAS/NRC. The professional staffs have read the correspondence, and they have observed the confirming evidence of uncorrected government scientific shortfalls in the daily newspapers (e.g., the failures of economic models). And they can read the de facto messages about priorities arising from four years of inactions at the NSB and NSF; from whose (Drs. Woolsey and Smelser) careers advance; and what discussions and public routes are to be limited at the NAS/NRC; and continued use of Dr. Alberts, the NAS/NRC and other advisory bodies. The new AD/SBE may face a greater mess than you and your colleagues understand or anticipated.

Sincerely,

(Dr.) Lloyd S. Etheredge, Director
Government Learning Project

cc: Dr. John Marburger, Science Adviser
NSB Members