

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 26, 2026

Russell Vought
Director, Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St., NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Mr. Vought,

We write to express our strong opposition to the proposed rule revising the Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance, docket OMB-2026-0034. We urge you to rescind this rule immediately. The proposed changes solidify federal grant-making as an unprecedented partisan power-grab that eliminates transparency of how taxpayer dollars are spent. This rule would derail American innovation and competitiveness at the local and national levels, kill good-paying American jobs, drive up costs for families, and halt essential projects in local communities. Instead of supporting data-driven investments that pay dividends for the American people, this guidance facilitates partisan ideals and cronyism, leaving Americans in the dark.

The proposed guidance enables corruption.

This rule turns federal assistance into a political slush fund. The rulemaking obliterates the objective, nonpartisan guardrails that ensure that grants and cooperative agreements are awarded to qualified projects. The rulemaking expands federal authority to impose special conditions, suspend Congressionally-directed funding, or terminate awards based solely on the administration's political priorities. No transparency or accountability requirements are imposed on any of this political intervention. This gives political appointees the power to circumvent Congress' Constitutional power of the purse and allows the direction of taxpayer dollars to friends and associates as opposed to qualified teams capable of advancing American innovation.

The proposed guidance hurts communities building in their own backyards.

This rulemaking creates an outsized level of influence for the Executive Branch in the local grant processes by enabling political appointees to select, or even cancel, previously awarded grants based on ideological and partisan values. States, local governments, Tribes, and locally-led organizations hold an intimate knowledge of how federal funding should be used in their communities. Creating a system where grantees must cater to the priorities of the current political

party prevents them from prioritizing the actual needs of the community. This has already impacted vital investments in transportation infrastructure,¹ energy,² affordable housing, and the modernization of resident services³ in cities across the nation. Projects that were awarded funding under a previous administration have been notified that their funding is now paused and under review despite shovels already being in the ground. This is disruptive and a waste of valuable taxpayer dollars. If finalized, these guidelines would only encourage and perpetuate this waste and uncertainty that hinge on political whims.

The proposed guidance undermines American scientific competitiveness.

Basing funding decisions on politics rather than vetted rubrics and peer review is a severe form of government overreach that prevents intellectual freedom, and with it, the objective, methodical nature of curiosity-driven science that leads to innovation. America's unique scientific ecosystem that enabled our innovative edge and global leadership is built around federal research and development (R&D) funding that fills market gaps that industry cannot, trains a highly skilled workforce, funds cutting-edge research, and catalyzes commercialization of that research to create jobs and improve quality of life. In just one example, experimental research on reptiles in the 1980s led to the invention of GLP-1 medicines that are revolutionizing health care today.^{4,5} Our country risks losing its competitive edge in innovation, invention, and technology development should partisan politics be put above scientific integrity and intellectual freedom, as this rule proposes to do.

Seventy percent of federal R&D dollars flow to universities and labs. This funding is used to train students and attract talent.⁶ Every single dollar of this R&D funding generates between \$1.40-\$2.10 in economic returns to taxpayers: *the highest return of any government spending*.⁷ The uncertainty around scientific integrity, exacerbated by the very consideration of this rule, is already causing brain drain. Faculty are reducing the timeline to train graduate students from previous

1 Paul, J. & Dolven, T. (2025, December 16). Trump administration cancels \$109M in environmentally focused transportation grants for Colorado. The Colorado Sun. <https://coloradosun.com/2025/12/16/trump-administration-cuts-transportation-grants-colorado/>

2 Thakore, I. (2025, October 2). Department of Energy cancels more than \$608 million for projects in Colorado. Colorado Public Radio. <https://www.cpr.org/2025/10/02/energy-department-colorado-projects-canceled/>

3 Brasch, S. (2025, May 28). Colorado environmental justice groups are struggling to keep their projects alive after federal funding cuts. Colorado Public Radio. <https://www.cpr.org/2025/05/28/colorado-environmental-justice-groups-struggling-federal-funding-cuts/>

4 Melani, D. (2024, May 6). How GLP-1 Drugs Went From Lab Discovery to Weight-Loss Breakthroughs. Retrieved June 15, 2026, from <https://news.cuanschutz.edu/news-stories/how-glp-1-drugs-went-from-lab-discovery-to-weight-loss-breakthroughs>

5 Schwarcz, J. (2023, May 26). The Right Chemistry: How the Gila monster assisted weight-loss research. Montreal Gazette. <https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/columnists/the-right-chemistry-how-the-gila-monster-assisted-weight-loss-research/>

6 Ostertag, M. (2025). How Reducing Federal R&D Reduces GDP Growth. <https://itif.org/publications/2025/09/15/how-reducing-federal-rd-reduces-gdp-growth/>

7 Fieldhouse, A. J., & Mertens, K. (2026, February 21). The Returns to Government R&D: Evidence from U.S. Appropriations Shocks.

standards, and universities are accepting fewer students and rescinding acceptances.^{8,9} Meanwhile, other countries are recruiting our scientists to work abroad in their laboratories and research facilities.^{10,11,12} We are no longer attracting the brightest students and the leading researchers from here in the U.S. or from around the world with our top university research programs and laboratories.^{13,14,15,16} We cannot afford to export American innovation and American jobs because of partisan games.

The proposed guidance would censor life-saving science to promote a political agenda.

This ruling would solidify an attack on intellectual freedom under the guise of avoiding “diversity, equity, and inclusion” in federally funded activities. That attack goes to such extremes that it has already stopped research into inherently unique issues, such as ovarian cancer in females,¹⁷ which were identified by keyword searches including words like “women”.¹⁸ Ideological restrictions could eliminate funding for credible research projects simply because an application contains terms like “Black Americans” or “Asian Americans.” For example, this overreach directly threatens vital funding for sickle cell disease, despite the fact that Black Americans account for 90% of those diagnosed in the United States.¹⁹ Hepatitis research into life saving treatments would also be derailed because the disease disproportionately affects Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.²⁰ The cost of these cuts is measured in American lives.

8 Federal Research Cuts Threaten U.S. Innovation and Leadership | Association of American Universities (AAU). (2025, July 23). <https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/federal-research-cuts-threaten-us-innovation-and-leadership>

9 Impacts of Restrictions on Federal Grant Funding in Physics and Astronomy Graduate Programs. (2025, April 23). AIP. <https://www.aip.org/statistics/impacts-of-restrictions-on-federal-grant-funding-in-physics-and-astronomy-graduate-programs>

10 As American Science Faces Cuts, Other Countries See an Opportunity | Association of American Universities (AAU). (2025, June 27). <https://www.aau.edu/newsroom/leading-research-universities-report/american-science-faces-cuts-other-countries-see>

11 Scientific Talent in America: Going Abroad or Choosing Not to Come | Association of American Universities (AAU). (2026, January 5). <https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/scientific-talent-america-going-abroad-or-choosing-not-come>

12 The US used to be a haven for research. Now, scientists are packing their bags. (n.d.). Christian Science Monitor. <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2025/0825/trump-science-brain-drain-europe>

13 Abandoning the US: Top Chinese scientists return home. (2025, September 12). South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/series/3325286/abandoning-us-top-chinese-scientists-return-home>

14 In the race to attract the world’s smartest minds, China is gaining on the US | CNN. (2025, September 29). <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/29/china/china-reverse-brain-drain-science-tech-competition-us-intl-hnk>

15 Wang, V. (2025, September 26). As Trump Tightens Visas, China Woos World’s Science Graduates. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/26/world/asia/china-tech-workers-visas-us-h1b.html>

16 Witze, A. (2025). 75% of US scientists who answered Nature poll consider leaving. Nature, 640(8058), 298–299. <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-025-00938-y>

17 HHS Grants Terminated. (n.d.). HHS. https://taggs.hhs.gov/content/Data/HHS_Grants_Terminated.pdf

18 Muyl, E., & Lydgate, A. (2025, July 21). How Trump Killed Cancer Research. Wired. <https://www.wired.com/story/how-trump-killed-cancer-research/>

19 CDC. (2024, May 22). Data and Statistics on Sickle Cell Disease. Sickle Cell Disease (SCD). <https://www.cdc.gov/sickle-cell/data/index.html>

20 Viral Hepatitis and Asian Americans | Office of Minority Health. (2026, January). <https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/hepatitis-and-asian-americans>

The proposed guidance razes foundational pillars of the American scientific enterprise.

Global collaborations where experts exchange ideas and resources give rise to new findings that are shared through the publication of peer-reviewed manuscripts. *This kind of exchange is the very foundation of American leadership in science and innovation.* Arbitrarily blocking international research collaboration due to xenophobic politics will lead to the loss of our world-leading scientific status. Researchers frequently collaborate through relationships forged at conferences where they communicate their work, for which funds would be prohibited from being used by this rule. Additionally, preventing scientists from sharing the results of their research in peer-reviewed journals would further eliminate transparency. International collaborations and partnerships provide essential opportunities for maximizing resources and ensuring that the best minds are contributing to new discoveries, but these changes would disallow any federal funds from being used for collaboration with “covered foreign countries or regions” as determined in part by executive orders which can change with no warning or limits. Research conducted on NASA’s International Space Station (ISS) has led to new water purification systems, better understanding of diseases like asthma and cancer, and improved disaster response.²¹ Without international collaboration, the ISS would never have come to fruition, and these discoveries would have been left in the dark.

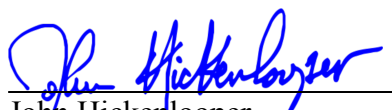
The proposed guidance increases bureaucracy and red tape.

While this administration claims to champion efficiency, this rule does the exact opposite. It overburdens local governments, small businesses, and research institutions in a mountain of duplicative paperwork, audits, and political compliance certifications. This unwanted bureaucracy acts as a tax on local projects. When towns and small businesses are forced to spend time and resources navigating arbitrary federal red tape, project timelines stretch out, and costs skyrocket. These costs are ultimately passed directly on to American families.

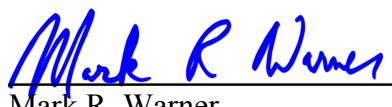
We share the goals of improved transparency, accountability, and oversight; clarification of regulatory structure; and reducing recipient burden—all in pursuit of continuing America’s global leadership in science and innovation. However, these regulations would act in opposition to these goals. They would undermine our country’s competitiveness, erode our scientific ecosystem, increase unwanted bureaucracy, enable corruption, and perpetuate uncertainty across our local communities. We strongly urge you to withdraw this proposed rule. Instead, we encourage you to craft productive, unbiased guidance that actually serves the American people.

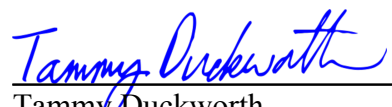
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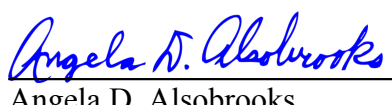
21 20 Breakthroughs from 20 Years of Science aboard the International Space Station—NASA. (2020, October 26). <https://www.nasa.gov/missions/station/20-breakthroughs-from-20-years-of-science-aboard-the-international-space-station/>

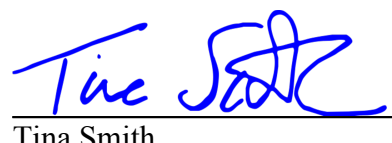

John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

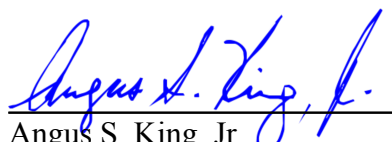

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

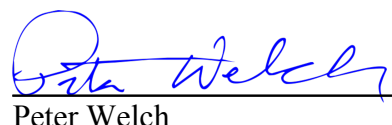

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

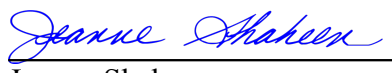

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator


Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

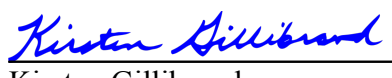

Tina Smith
United States Senator


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator


Peter Welch
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator


Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator


Kirsten Gillibrand
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Catherine Cortez Masto
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