

May 17, 2006

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Commerce, Science & Transportation Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It is our understanding that the Committee will soon mark up legislation related to innovation and competitiveness. As organizations and institutions with expertise in areas related to ocean and atmospheric research and education, we urge the Committee to support provisions developed by Co-Chairman Inouye that would authorize a number of research and education activities in these disciplines that would assist in the drive to improve this Nation's international competitiveness.

Much of the focus on improving this Nation's ability to compete in today's global market place rests on our ability to educate and train the scientific workforce of today and tomorrow. Equally important is the development of new knowledge and its application that will yield new products and processes that will enable our companies to maintain their competitive edge in the market place of ideas.

The very conduct of cutting-edge ocean and atmospheric research requires an interdisciplinary approach - requiring teams of skilled researchers and technicians with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds working together to solve complex problems, manage ever increasing amounts of data, and develop new, state-of-the-art instrumentation, high speed computers, software, and other advanced technologies. People who can conduct research and problem-solve in this kind of an environment are exactly the kind of skilled, technical workforce needed by U.S. industries. Thus the oceanic and atmospheric sciences are a critical source for new knowledge, new technologies, and the scientific and technical workforce vital for this Nation's economic competitiveness.

The Administration has proposed an important initiative called the American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) that implicitly recognizes and supports the critical linkage between research, education and economic competitiveness. The ACI focuses primarily on increasing support for the physical sciences. We strongly support the ACI and Congress' efforts to enact legislation to support the ACI. We believe, however, that to truly harness the research and education enterprise to assist in the drive to strengthen this Nation's economic competitiveness, Congress should ensure that Senator Inouye's proposal to recognize and support the federal programs that support ocean and atmospheric research and education are also included in the Committee's legislation.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these views.

Sincerely,

University Corporation for Atmospheric Research

www.ucar.edu

Weather Coalition

www.weathercoalition.org

National Association of Marine Laboratories

www.naml.org

Sea Grant Association

www.sga.seagrant.org

Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education

www.coreocean.org

Coastal States Organization

www.coastalstates.org

Ecological Society of America

www.esa.org

American Society of Limnology and Oceanography

aslo.org

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

www.whoi.edu

Drilling, Observation and Sampling of the Earth's Continental Crust

www.dosecc.org

National Council for Science and the Environment

ncseonline.org/

Council of Environmental Deans and Directors

ncseonline.org/CEDD

American Meteorological Society

www.ametsoc.org

National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges

www.nasulgc.org