

Synchrotron and Neutron Users' Group

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September 2, 2005

The Honorable Samuel W. Bodman
Secretary of Energy
U.S. Department of Energy
S-1/Forrestal Building
1000 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Bodman:

We are writing to you on behalf of more than 8,300 users of the nation's neutron and synchrotron light source facilities operated by the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Basic Energy Sciences. These national user facilities operate in support of research across a broad spectrum, especially in the physical, life, and engineering sciences. These major facilities are also a key element of the national infrastructure for research examining the structure and dynamics of materials. Like other large scale Office of Science facilities, they are a cornerstone of the national science infrastructure that serves vibrant user communities based at universities, in industry, and in government laboratories.

The construction and effective operation of large scale facilities has been a hallmark of the Department of Energy and its predecessor agencies going back to its inception. We are delighted that the Department continues to invest in new capabilities that define the state of the art on an international scale. However, we are concerned by the trends in support for major facilities in recent years. As a result, the current accelerator and reactor based sources are operating well below their full potential, to the detriment of the research programs of the scientific communities whom we represent.

While we recognize that there are significant budget pressures on discretionary spending that transcend all government departments and missions, we urge you, in your formulation of budget requests for FY2007 and beyond, to consider that the ultimate solution to near term budgetary woes is economic growth founded on a strong science and technology base. The human ingenuity that grows from science and technology initiatives will translate into real breakthroughs essential to a secure energy future. We have been pleased to see your remarks in support of science at the Department of Energy and take heart in your understanding of the central role of science in driving the U.S. economy. We strongly support the Department's mission in developing a secure energy future for America.

As you know, anticipated funding for facilities in FY2006 (and beyond according to the Administration's out year projections) will continue the flat or near-flat funding profile that has plagued these flagship installations for the past few years. We were pleased to see that Congress has recognized the value of DOE's facilities in its FY2006 appropriations language, but it is unclear how this will translate into real positive impact on the facility operations budgets.


We urge DOE, within the framework of the broader Administration's priorities, to take the initiative in addressing this problem. Because of facility fixed costs, increases in variable costs, and historic underutilization due to funding shortfalls, the U.S. scientific community has not been able to fully exploit DOE user facilities for the scientific enterprise. We respectfully suggest that you consider reversing this trend by funding a major facilities initiative to help science flourish in the U.S. and to fully leverage these engines of economic growth.

The Department of Energy's synchrotron light sources and neutron sources represent a unique and very valuable resource, not replicated in industry or universities, and they are still the envy of the world. The achievements of the scientific community using these facilities is a powerful testimony to their value, and we are willing to engage in any way necessary to help communicate that value to the public and Congress. We welcome your input as to what we can do to support your objectives. We would be delighted to meet with you personally in order to convey our sense of enthusiasm for the Department of Energy's stewardship role in initial facility construction, ongoing facility development and operation, and to determine how best we might assist in ensuring strong support for continued and improved funding in support of this mission.

Sincerely yours,



Robert Briber
President, Neutron Scattering Society of America




Gregory Denbeaux
Chair, Executive Committee, Advanced Light Source Users' Organization



Chris Gould
Chair, Executive Committee, Los Alamos Neutron Science Center Users' Group



Thomas Koetzle
Chair, Executive Committee, Intense Pulsed Neutron Source Users' Organization



Peter Stephens
Chair, Executive Committee, National Synchrotron Light Source Users' Organization



Carol Thompson
Chair, Executive Committee, Advanced Photon Source Users' Organization



Chair, Executive Committee, Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory Users' Organization



Prof. Angus P. Wilkinson
Chair, Executive Committee, Spallation Neutron Source and High Flux Isotope Reactor Users' Group

Synchrotron and Neutron Users' Group
September 6, 2005

Copies to:

Robert C. Byrd, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Pete Domenici, Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water
David L. Hobson, Chairman, House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
Jerry Lewis, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
John Marburger, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy
David Obey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Raymond Orbach, Director Office of Science, U.S. Department of Energy
Joel Parriott, Program Examiner, Office of Management and Budget
Harry Reid, Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Peter J. Visclosky, Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development