



*Open Letter from NSF AFGE Union to Members of the National Science Board
Statement from AFGE Local 3403*

May 02, 2025

Dear Distinguished Member of the U.S. National Science Board,

For decades, the National Science Board (NSB) has provided a guiding light to the scientific endeavors of the United States and valuable oversight to the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) as it has grown and adapted to best serve the nation's need for basic research and STEM education. Your dedication to these causes has resulted in transformative advancements in science, through the funding programs developed and administered by NSF. The establishment of NSF's Merit Review process, introduction of Broader Impacts, dedication to broadening participation and support for translation has allowed NSF to cultivate several generations of scientists and educators, who are increasingly representative of everyone in our country and who have gone on to serve both the public and private sector of the United States.

This has not been without challenges, and you have had the courage and wisdom to draw attention to difficult topics, such as barriers to participation in the scientific enterprise, loss of research capacity to China, and concerning trends in U.S. STEM education. Thank you for all you have done for U.S. based scientists and educators and for your constructive support of NSF over so many years.

Our Union represents the majority of NSF employees. Please believe us when we say that NSF, the driving force behind American scientific innovations for three-quarters of a century, is being destroyed. We ask you to again share your brave, informed, and impactful voices to take a stand and defend the innovation and economic growth the NSF produces.

The meritorious work of America's research and education enterprise is being terminated. The gold standard Merit Review Process has been subverted by recent terminations of awards and introduction of political review that has no statutory basis. Laws are now being actively broken everyday in the administration of NSF. Our Program Officers are forced into violating their Oath of Office and the Constitution. Broadening participation and inclusion goals, which you supported and asked NSF to implement, are being aggressively rolled back. The NSF workforce is being decimated, as employees are being fired or intimidated into resignations and early retirements with the threats of upcoming reductions in force. This will result in centuries of institutional knowledge being permanently lost. The budget of the current fiscal year is in jeopardy, and future budgets are expected to be reduced by half. In that scenario, NSF will be neither able to effectively administer existing awards, jeopardizing current investments, nor make many new awards, effectively starving a generation of U.S. based researchers and educators in STEM. The funding ecosystem that has provided so many transformative impacts to our way of life and economy is under existential threat.

As this crisis has built over the last 100 days, the NSB has been largely silent.

We do not believe that you agree with what is happening. **We urge you to speak up.** Both in history and in everyday practice, looking the other way and hoping for the best does not and will not work. There is no version of appeasement that will allow this engine for knowledge to be easily rebuilt in the future. Please measure the existential risk of the NSB being dissolved against the real and present danger of the ongoing destruction of NSF. What is your role, if not to draw attention to this very visible and growing crisis? Hundreds of thousands of scientists and educators need your help. Please do not hesitate to take a stand defending NSF, even if it is your last act as a member of the NSB.

Please protect your legacy of honesty and fairness, free of political influence. Please protect our research communities and NSF, stand up and object, raise your hand, speak up, be brave — as you have been so many times in the past. Let the NSB be the beacon of guiding light which brings us hope in these times of darkness.

AFGE Local 3403 (NSF Union)
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