



## SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE CCP DEMOCRATS | RANKING MEMBER RO KHANNA

June 4, 2026

### **The Honorable Dan Scavino**

Director  
White House Office of Presidential Personnel  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

### **The Honorable Brian Stone**

Acting Director  
National Science Foundation  
401 Dulany St  
Alexandria, VA 22314

*Dear Director Stone and Director Scavino,*

We are writing to document our grave concern regarding the administration's decision to summarily terminate all 22 members of the National Science Board (NSB) who advise and support the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the catastrophic signal this sends to America's strategic competitors and allied collaborators. These firings are another example of how the Trump White House is harming our competition with China by carelessly cutting budgets, disempowering key presidential appointees, and undermining scientific merit-review.

These firings are part of a larger White House pattern of institutions and experts being "systematically either dissolved or eviscerated," as dismissed NSB member Dr. Keivan Stassun put it.<sup>1</sup> Association of American Universities President Barbara R. Snyder, has expressed similar shock: "At a time when China is investing heavily in science and has matched or surpassed the United States in several key fields, dismantling the NSB's independent voice sends exactly the wrong signal."<sup>2</sup> In an open letter to Congress, 2,500 scientists called the decision: "an alarming attack on the ability of the US to engage in basic and applied research, and to be competitive globally, particularly given that China is now investing more in R&D than the US."<sup>3</sup> Or, as put more succinctly by our colleague Zoe Lofgren, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: "This is the latest stupid move made by a president who continues to harm science and American innovation."<sup>4</sup>

As Select Committee members, we also wish to highlight and learn more about recent findings from NSB on U.S.-China scientific competition. Finalized prior to their termination, NSB's 2026 State of U.S. Science and Engineering Report, warned that for the first time, China has overtaken the United States in scientific R&D expenditures.<sup>5</sup> They also finalized

---

<sup>1</sup> Dan Garisto, "NSF SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD FIRED BY TRUMP ADMINISTRATION," *Nature*, May 7, 2026.

<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-026-01361-7.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Barbara R. Snyder, "Statement of AAU President Barbara R. Snyder on the Administration's Dismissal of National Science Board Members," *Association of American Universities*, April 25, 2026. <https://www.aau.edu/newsroom/press-releases/administrations-dismissal-national-science-board>

<sup>3</sup> Stand Up for Science, "OPEN LETTER TO CONGRESS DEMANDING THE RESTORATION OF THE NSB," May 10, 2026.

<https://www.standupforscience.net/nasem-letter-to-congress>

<sup>4</sup> Office of Zoe Lofgren, "Ranking Member Lofgren Reacts to Latest Trump Scheme to Undermine Science," April 26, 2026.

<https://lofgren.house.gov/media/press-releases/ranking-member-lofgren-reacts-latest-trump-scheme-undermine-science>

<sup>5</sup> Adam Sella, "Scientists Press Congress on Trump's Dismissal of Funding Agency Board," *New York Times*, May 11, 2026.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/11/us/politics/nsf-science-congress-trump.html>; National Science Foundation, "The State of U.S. Science and Engineering 2026," May 4, 2026. <https://ncses.nsf.gov/pubs/nsbsep20261/executive-summary>

a two-page policy brief to further explain the impact and implications of these alarming US-China findings; a document that has not yet been released.<sup>6</sup>

Despite NSB finding that China was surging ahead in scientific R&D expenditures, Trump, and his Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have reduced funding for new medical and science grants this year to their lowest levels since 1990 and delivered NSF grants at their slowest pace in at least 35 years.<sup>7</sup> While Congress pushed back on the White House's proposed budget cuts to NSF this year, Trump has since requested a 55% cut for NSF in 2027, and also interfered in the release of NSF's already appropriated funding.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, China is racing ahead. Over the last decade, China has increased its public R&D spending by a staggering 90%, reaching \$133 billion according to OECD data. As Trump continues to retreat, China seeks to compound its advantage; its most recent Five-Year Plan commits China to increase R&D spending by at least 7 percent for the next five years.<sup>9</sup> China's science funding push is already seeing major results. In 2024, China overtook the United States in total scientific publications and in publications within the world's most selective scientific journals.<sup>10</sup>

Representative Stevens and I have already brought attention to how Trump and OMB have interfered with civil servants for doing their job and reduced funding for science programs that maintain America's global leadership.<sup>11</sup> Trump allowing China to surpass the U.S. in scientific R&D is the final straw. We demand a plan for how the NSF will maintain its essential functions and global standing. We demand a complete and timely response regarding the future of the NSB's unjustly fired board. And we demand to see the White House respond to the report's findings that China has surpassed the U.S. in R&D spending.

*We request the following information, covering the period from April 26<sup>th</sup> to present, by no later than June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026:*

1. *Identify who ordered the summary dismissal of the Board and their rationale for doing so.*
2. *A response from the National Science Foundation on the NSB's findings related to the U.S. R&D funding gap with China.*
3. *Releasing the two-page policy brief from NSB members on U.S.-China scientific competition.*

---

<sup>6</sup> Jeffery Mervis, "In unreleased document, fired U.S. science board issues stark warning about keeping pace with China," *Science*, May 14, 2026. <https://www.science.org/content/article/unreleased-document-fired-u-s-science-board-issues-stark-warning-about-keeping-pace>

<sup>7</sup> Aatish Bhatia, Irineo Cabrerros, Asmaa Elkeurti and Ethan Singer, "Trump Has Cut Science Funding to Its Lowest Level in Decades," *New York Times*, May 22, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/05/22/upshot/nsf-grants-trump-cuts.html>; Aatish Bhatia, Amy Fan, Jonah Smith and Irena Hwang, "The U.S. Is Funding Fewer Grants in Every Area of Science and Medicine," *New York Times*, December 2, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/12/02/upshot/trump-science-funding-cuts.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ames Grawert and Mark Krass, "The Cost of the Trump Administration's Attacks on Research Funding," *Brennan Center for Justice*, May 14, 2026. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/cost-trump-administrations-attacks-research-funding>; Jeffery Mervis, "Analysis: Why the research money isn't flowing from NSF and NIH," *Science*, March 16, 2026. <https://www.science.org/content/article/analysis-why-research-money-isn-t-flowing-nsf-and-nih>

<sup>9</sup> Melanie Hart, Caroline Costello, and Samantha Wong, "Five takeaways for US policymakers about China's new five-year development plan," *The Atlantic Council*, March 31, 2026. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/dispatches/five-takeaways-for-us-policymakers-about-chinas-new-five-year-development-plan/>

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Caroline Wagner, "China surpasses US in research spending – the consequences extend far beyond scientific ranking and clout," *The Conversation*, April 24, 2026. <https://theconversation.com/china-surpasses-us-in-research-spending-the-consequences-extend-far-beyond-scientific-ranking-and-clout-280543>

<sup>11</sup> House Select Committee on China - Democrats, "Letter to Russell Vought," November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025. <https://democrats-selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-omb-director-vought-on-u.s-stem-as-prc-invests-in-innovation.pdf>

Sincerely,

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ro Khanna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Haley Stevens  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Haley Stevens". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name being more prominent.