

13 June 2012

Dear Representative,

The American Geophysical Union (AGU) is a non-profit, non-partisan scholarly society of over 61,000 Earth and space scientists headquartered in Washington, DC. As executive director of AGU, I am writing to express serious concerns on the part of AGU regarding a recent amendment (S.AMDT. 2060) to the DATA Act (H.R. 2146) and the 21st Century Postal Service Act of 2012 (S. 1789).

As written, this amendment would severely restrict the participation of government scientists in scientific meetings and conferences. We believe the amendment, as written, has far-reaching negative consequences beyond its original intent of avoiding wasteful spending of taxpayers' money. AGU fully supports the elimination of wasteful spending, but we urge you to consider ways to avoid excesses that will not also inadvertently damage the United States' scientific enterprise.

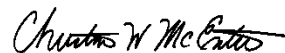
A very important means by which progress is made in scientific research is in the exchange of ideas that takes place at scientific meetings and conferences. Scientists from academia, industry, and government, as well as students studying to become scientists, come together to formally present and discuss their research and learn about research by others that may have implications for their work.

The amendment to H.R. 2146/S. 1789 threatens to damage essential communication among scientists. Government attendance at scientific meetings not only fosters collaboration and future partnerships between government scientists and academia and industry, but the collaboration and exchange of ideas also avoids duplicative scientific efforts.

AGU's concern is related to the fact that many of the threats our nation faces today are based in the Earth sciences. Examples include natural hazards, ranging from earthquakes to severe weather, and natural resources, including water management and availability of rare earth minerals. Restricting communication among scientists conducting research in these areas – including government scientists in USGS, DOE, and other agencies – has implications for public safety, the national economy, and national security.

We ask that Congress either reject this amendment or modify the legislation so that federal employees may continue to attend scientific non-governmental conferences. Please let us know what we can do to assist you in this process. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Christine W. McEntee  
CEO, American Geophysical Union