

ENERGY SCIENCES COALITION

December 4, 2003

The Honorable Spencer Abraham
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Abraham:

I am writing on behalf of the Energy Science Coalition (ESC) to express our strong support for the excellent work done by the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board's Task Force on the Future of Science Programs at the Department of Energy. The ESC is a broad based coalition of organizations representing scientists, engineers and mathematicians in universities, industry and national laboratories who are committed to supporting and advancing the scientific research programs of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), and in particular, the DOE Office of Science.

The Energy Sciences Coalition believes that the draft report from the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board task force delivers a frank assessment of the future of science programs at the Department of Energy. We are specifically in favor of increasing the budget for the Office of Science since its budget has lost purchasing power over the last two decades. As a result, nine out of ten proposals to the Office of Science are not funded, infrastructure is decaying, and recruitment and retention of top American scientists and engineers is challenged. Moreover, as noted in the report, U.S. industry has largely phased out its basic research programs, which has resulted in the nation no longer being the clear leader in some important areas of science.

To help reverse these funding trends that threaten the U.S. scientific enterprise, we agree with the report's recommendation that the Department should be more aggressive in managing the nation's physical science and engineering programs. For example, an Under Secretary for Science at DOE would highlight the invaluable role of the science mission at DOE, facilitate coordination of DOE programs to achieve the Department's and our nation's goals and would provide the Office of Science with a clear and effective public and political voice. In addition, the Department should undertake regular reviews

of its science portfolio and evaluate its ability to meet the Department's 20 year strategy, which would guide an aggressive effort to maintain and establish laboratories, facilities and infrastructure, as well as enhance the Department's role in educating future scientists and engineers.

The members of the Energy Sciences Coalition are keenly aware of the leadership role that the Department of Energy must take to guide basic research in the physical sciences into the future. We applaud the efforts of the Task Force, and we urge you to provide the leadership and determination necessary to implement these important recommendations.

Finally, we deeply appreciate and are encouraged by the attention and leadership that you as Secretary have paid to the important scientific research supported by the Department. We also strongly commend the Director of the Office of Science, Dr. Ray Orbach, and the Department for developing a sound 20-year facilities plan. If the Office of Science is to lead the Department toward achieving its national, economic, and energy security goals, the steps outlined by the SEAB report must be taken.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Bannan, Chair
Energy Sciences Coalition