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Physical
Society

One Physics Ellipse
College Park, MD 20740-3844
aps.org

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Brown University

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March 30, 2021

Kei Koizumi
Acting Director
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Executive Office of the President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20504

Jason Matheny
Deputy Assistant to the President for Technology and National Security
Executive Office of the President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20504

Dear Mr. Koizumi and Dr. Matheny:

On behalf of the American Physical Society, I am writing to you concerning two documents that were released publicly near the end of the previous administration – the “Presidential Memorandum on the United States Government-Supported Research and Development National Security Policy” (NSPM-33) and the Joint Committee on the Research Environment (JCORE) report titled “Recommended Practices for Strengthening the Security and Integrity of America’s Science and Technology Research Enterprise.”

These documents have the potential to significantly impact the physics community, as well as the research community more broadly, depending on how NSPM-33 is implemented. Given its potential impact, we strongly encourage you to solicit feedback from the research community broadly – preferably via a public comment process – prior to making decisions on how to move forward with NSPM-33 implementation.

APS appreciates the legitimate concerns related to national and research security, and, at the same time, the Society also stresses the essential nature of scientific inquiry and the necessity to balance scientific discovery with security concerns. During the last few years, we’ve engaged with policymakers in Congress and the Executive Branch advocating for such a balanced approach. Additionally, we shared these views with our members and the public last year in an APS Board Statement titled, “[Open Science and a Recommitment to Research Principles](#).”

While we regularly engaged with previous administration officials working on these issues - both within the OSTP and the National Security Council – ultimately, the presidential memo and JCORE report were released just days prior to the previous administration leaving office. This timing provided no opportunity for the community to evaluate the documents or provide feedback.

We recognize there are obligations of researchers around disclosure and transparency with respect to foreign research funding and potential conflicts of interest and commitment. What is essential for our community is that these obligations are both clear and consistent. While there are parts of NPM-33 and the JCORE report that are clear and feasible, other pieces of the documents raise concerns, including the use of vague, undefined terms and the scope of some requirements and recommendations.

Given the importance of these documents to the US research community and their lack of clarity, we recommend that the implementation of NSPM-33 be delayed until OSTP has had the opportunity to carefully review the documents and stakeholders have had an opportunity to provide input, which could be achieved through a public comment period.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on a balanced approach to addressing the legitimate concerns related to research security. Please do not hesitate to contact APS through Mark Elsesser (elsesser@aps.org; 202.662.8170) at our Office of Government Affairs if you have any questions, require additional information or would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvester J. Gates, Jr." in a cursive script.

Sylvester James Gates, Jr.
President, American Physical Society