



THE GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA®

Geoscience Policy

March 2024

Hello from Capitol Hill!

As the election year rolls on, Washington, D.C. has had a busy couple of months, and we have plenty of updates in this edition of our Public Policy Newsletter. The headlining news is the end of the appropriations process for fiscal year 2024, leading to finalized budgets for agencies essential to geoscience including cuts to the NSF, USGS, and NOAA. We also have some new legislation to keep an eye on, updates from the Geology and Public Policy Committee's March Meeting, and fresh opportunities to engage with policy on behalf of the geosciences! If you have any questions about the information here, or have opportunities you would like GSA to highlight, please let us know.

Sincerely,
Josh Martin
GSA Science Policy Fellow
jmartin@geosociety.org

Geology and Public Policy Committee Hill Day 2024

On March 4th, 2024 members of GSA's Geology and Public Policy Committee (GPPC) travelled to Washington, D.C. to take meetings on Capitol Hill and advocate for the geosciences! Members met with staff members from the offices of:

- Sen. Tammy Baldwin (WI)
- Sen Ron Johnson (WI)
- Rep. Glenn Grothman (WI-6)
- Rep. Susan Wild (PA-7)
- Sen. Bob Casey (PA)
- Sen. Markwayne Mullin (OK)
- Rep. Frank Lucas (OK-3)
- Sen. John Cornyn (TX)
- Sen. Ted Cruz (TX)
- Sen. John Hickenlooper (CO)
- Sen. Michael Bennet (CO)
- Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (NM)
- Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (NM-3)



(left to right) GPPC members Maureen Muldoon, Elijah White, and MaryAnn Malinconico at the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

GSA's visits even made the news, being shared by [Politico!](#)

While in DC, the GPPC also held a committee meeting, discussing updates to two of GSA's position statements:

- The Role of the Geoscientist in Assuring the Safety and Integrity of Infrastructure
- Integrating Geoscience with Sustainable Land-Use Management

The changes discussed at this meeting will be sent to GSA's Council for approval. A complete collection of GSA's position statements can be found [here](#).

For more information on the Geology and Public Policy Committee, or for a roster of the current membership, please see the [Committees page on GSA's website](#).

Geosciences Congressional Visit Days 2024

Looking for a way to engage with policy makers and share the importance of the geosciences? Geoscience Congressional Visit Days (GEO-CVD) will take place in Washington, D.C., on 11–12 September 2024. GEO-CVD is an annual event sponsored by the Geological Society of America in conjunction with other Earth science societies to increase the visibility of and support for the geosciences in Congress.

GEO-CVD participants will partake in a workshop that will offer a foundational understanding of science policy through a series of brief seminars and panels; networking opportunities; and resources for participants to develop messaging and materials for successful congressional visits. Participants in GEO-CVD have an opportunity to meet with Members of Congress and staff from key congressional offices and committees.

If you are interested in attending, apply [here](#) by August 2nd, 2024!



Dorian DeHart outside of Sen. Eric Schmitt's (R-MO) office at GEO-CVD 2023



Oriana Calagna outside of Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar's (R-FL-27) office at GEO-CVD 2023

USGS Advisory Committee for Science Quality and Integrity

The USGS is establishing and seeking nominations for the Advisory Committee for Science Quality and Integrity (OSQI). The committee will advise the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of the USGS on matters related to the responsibilities of OSQI, including their functional areas such as:

- USGS Fundamental Science Practices
- Office of Tribal Relations
- Youth and Education in Science
- Interactions with other federal science agencies
- Science quality oversight mechanisms for USGS laboratories
- and standards of science quality and integrity throughout the bureau.

Anyone may submit nominations by April 11, 2024 via email to ictaylor@usgs.gov or mail to Joanne C. Taylor, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Science Quality and Integrity, 12201 Sunrise Valley Drive, Mailstop 911, Reston, VA 20192. Nominations should include a resume providing an adequate description of the nominee's qualifications.

Serving on this committee is a truly unique opportunity to influence the future of federal science at the USGS and to enhance your professional network!

For more information, see the Federal Register announcement [here](#)!



Legislative Updates

US Budget Appropriations Update

On March 9, 2024 President Biden signed into law an appropriations “minibus”. This law provides funding through September 30th, 2024 for many parts of the federal government relevant to geoscience including:

- The United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- The National Science Foundation (NSF)
- The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- The Department of Energy
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

While many of these agencies saw cuts to their topline budgets this year, including a 3% cut to the USGS and an 8% cut to the NSF, there are successes to be celebrated. **Kenneth Williams**, a member of GSA’s Geology and Public Policy Committee and Senior Scientist at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, was a part of a successful Congressionally Directed Spending request through the offices of Senators Michael Bennet and John Hickenlooper. More information can be found [here](#).

Moving beyond the 2024 fiscal year, work is already underway for the 2025 Fiscal Year (FY25) budget! President Biden released his Presidential Budget Request for FY25 on March 11, 2024, which can be found [here](#). The highlights include:

- An 8.5% increase over FY24 for the USGS
- A 10% increase over FY24 for the NSF

Many offices have already begun accepting programmatic requests for funding for FY25, which can lead to successful spending requests like the one mentioned above. These requests also help appropriators in Congress prioritize funding for agencies like the NSF and USGS, so consider submitting programmatic requests to your congressional representatives while you can! For guidance on this process, please reach out to sciencepolicy@geosociety.org.

A Detailed Look at Funding for Science in the FY24 Budget

The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) budget will drop about 8% to just over \$9 billion, partially undoing the 12% boost the agency received in the previous budget cycle. That increase relied on a special supplemental appropriation that Congress did not sustain this year. If the supplement is not counted, NSF’s budget for fiscal year 2024 will be 2.5% higher than its base budget for the previous year.

Congress framed the supplement as a down payment on the vision of the CHIPS and Science Act, which sets ambitious budget targets for **NSF, NIST,** and the **DOE Office of Science.** So far, Congress has not come close to these targets, which will be very difficult to achieve in the current tight budget environment without further supplemental appropriations. The **DOE Office of Science** budget will increase about 2% to \$8.24 billion, within which its Isotope R&D and Production program will jump nearly 20%.

Some DOE science programs are still in line for flat budgets or cuts. The Office of Science’s Advanced Scientific Computing Research program will drop 5%, though an analogous program in NNSA will increase 5%. The Nuclear Physics program and the Biological and Environmental Research programs are held about flat.

NIST’s base budget will drop 8% to \$1.16 billion. This figure excludes about \$300 million in earmarks for research and construction projects external to NIST. Since Congress resumed earmarks in 2021, it has used NIST’s budget as the vehicle for funding many of those related to science. Meanwhile, the legislation will cut NIST’s budget for construction and facilities repair by a third, even though the agency faces a huge backlog of infrastructure modernization projects and made that work a top priority in its budget request.

Among agencies focused on environmental research, **USGS** is cut about 3% to \$1.46 billion and NOAA’s Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research is cut about 5% to \$726 million.

PROGRAM (millions)	FY23 ENACTED	REQUEST	FY24 FINAL
U.S. Geological Survey	\$1,497	\$1,786	\$1,455
Ecosystems	\$307	\$395	\$299
Core Science Systems	\$285	\$369	\$273
Water Resources	\$304	\$313	\$289
Natural Hazards	\$200	\$226	\$199
Facilities	\$188	\$197	\$184
Energy/Mineral Resources	\$104	\$151	\$101
Science Support	\$106	\$134	\$105

USGS FY24 budget comparison to FY23 budget and FY24 Presidential Budget Request. Values are shown in millions of dollars.

Natural Hazards Legislation

S. 3606 - National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2024 **S. 3788 - A Bill to Reauthorize the National Landslide Preparedness Act, and for Other Purposes**

Growing populations in hazard-prone locations, the interconnection of modern economies, and climate change are increasing the risks associated with natural hazards. These two bills seek to reauthorize two laws that fund the research and mitigation of earthquakes and landslides, among the costliest of natural hazards. The National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Act expired in October 2023 and the National Landslide Preparedness Act is expiring this fall, and their reauthorization is essential to the continuation of the invaluable research these laws help fund.

New Legislation

S. 3954 – Geothermal Energy Optimization Act

Lead Sponsor – Sen. Martin Heinrich (D-NM)

Cosponsors - Sen. Jim Risch (R-ID), Sen. Mike Lee (R-UT), Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)

Summary – This bill seeks to expand the development of geothermal energy by:

- Introducing a categorical exclusion for geothermal exploration drilling and well-field development, putting it in parity with oil and gas in terms of permitting;
- Creating a Geothermal Ombudsman and Strike Team to aid the field offices of the Bureau of Land Management, thus improving the performance of the permitting process and facilitating regional coordination between the field offices;
- Directing the Bureau of Land Management to hold geothermal lease sales more frequently, and expediting the leasing process.

Status – This bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on March 14, 2024

H.R. 7636 – Responsible Use of Seafloor Resources Act of 2024

Lead Sponsor– Rep. Carol Miller (R-WV-1)

Cosponsors – Rep. John Joyce (R-PA-13), Rep. Brandon Williams (R-NY22)

Summary – This bill seeks to prepare the United States for the commercial availability of this source of critical minerals by:

- By tasking the Department of Defense to provide resources for the build out of domestic nodule processing capacity to produce high purity critical minerals.
- By tasking the Office of Science Technology and Policy to report the potential diplomatic, economic and industry benefits nodules may provide to the U.S. in addition to the lifecycle environmental and social impacts associated with nodule-sourcing versus benchmark land-based critical minerals.
- Directing the Department of Commerce to assess the applicability of domestic seabed mineral legislation in the context of importing seabed minerals or derived products from abroad.

Status – This bill was referred to the House Committee on Natural Resources on March 12, 2024

Education Legislation

H.R.4002 - Relieving Economic Strain to Enhance American Resilience and Competitiveness in Higher Education and Research Act

Lead Sponsor – Rep. Jennifer McClellan (D-VA-4)

Cosponsors – [18 Democratic cosponsors](#)

Summary – The RESEARCHER Act seeks to ensure graduate students and post-doctoral researchers have financial stability by:

- Directing the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to develop a set of policy guidelines for Federal research agencies to address the financial instability of graduate and postdoctoral researchers
- Requiring Federal research agencies to develop and implement policies based on the guidelines developed by OSTP
- Amending the CHIPS and Science Act to supplement data collection on the financial instability of graduate and postdoctoral researchers and allowing the National Science Foundation to award grants to research this issue
- Commissioning a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine study on the status of financial instability of graduate and postdoctoral researchers
- Directing the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the implementation of the guidelines developed by OSTP at Federal research agencies.

Status – Referred to the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Updates

S. 2632 – Visa Processing Improvement Act

Update - GSA sent a letter of support for this bill, to Sen. Richard Durbin (IL), Sen. Lindsey Graham (SC), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (MN), Sen. Jerry Moran (KS), etc. You can find more information on the bill [here](#).

Other Legislation to Keep an Eye On

H.R. 401 – American Science First Act

- Current Status: Referred to House Committee on Space, Science, and Technology

H.R. 752 Securing Semiconductor Supply Chains Act of 2023

- Current Status: Passed in the House and sent to the Senate

S. 229 – Securing Semiconductor Supply Chains Act of 2023

- Current Status: Held at the Desk

H.R. 2685 – Mining Schools Act of 2023

- Current Status: Subcommittee hearing held

S. 912 – Mining Schools Act of 2023

- Current Status: Reported out of committee and placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar

S. 1281 – Mining Regulatory Clarity Act of 2023

- Current Status: Committee hearings held

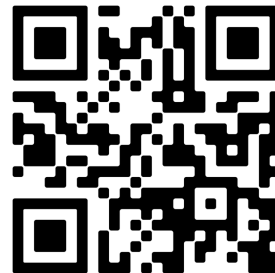
S. 1742 – Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act of 2023

- Current Status: Committee hearings held

GSA's Updated Community Page

Do you have information on a new study that could inform policy, or questions about the impact of a piece of legislation? Join GSA's Geology and Society Division and share it with us on the updated Community site! This is a space for sharing and discussing the many intersections of Geology and Society, including science policy, and we'd love to hear from you! To join:

- Go to <https://community.geosociety.org/gsocdivision/join>
- Sign in using your GSA membership credentials.
- Click "Join the G&S Division"!



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