



January 8, 2014

Senator Thomas R. Carper
513 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0803

Senator Thomas A. Coburn
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3604

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Coburn:

On behalf of the Materials Research Society (MRS), we ask you to monitor the implementation and impact OMB federal travel restrictions have on the national research enterprise and our innovation-based economy. It is not in the national interest to have our government-funded scientists bear a disproportionate burden under these guidelines or future legislation.

We agree with the importance of your Committee's mission to responsibly control federal spending. In the implementation of this mission and oversight, it is important to consider the role that attendance at professional society meetings plays in serving the objectives of government-funded research. Federal employee travel opportunities initiate collaborations between scientific researchers at universities, other government laboratories, and in industry, which, in turn, will optimize federal investment already made in innovation, intellectual property, and scientific research. Extreme travel restrictions will have unanticipated consequences on scientific productivity within the U.S. The nature of scientists' work requires them to share research findings with their peers and colleagues at scientific meetings. This interaction is fundamental to scientific advances and serves as the means to ensure best practices, seed ideas for subsequent research, and ultimately yield cutting-edge scientific developments.

Participation in scientific meetings and the associated travel helps to facilitate technology transfer and permit researchers to meet the scientific objectives of their own government-funded research. Many exchanges and collaborations between scientists employed at government laboratories and those in industry and academia are initiated at scientific conferences. For centuries, peer collaboration has been fundamental to scientific advances and is unlikely to occur without personal interaction. In the most damaging case, the unique innovation engine of the U.S. which is powered by people could slow or halt. Taken to extreme, current guidelines will negatively impact scientific discovery, job creation, economic growth, our global competitiveness, and national security.

The Materials Research Society represents over 16,000 professional scientists and engineers who work on fundamental and applied research and development. Members of MRS work at the

forefront of technology—from basic research to product development—in fields as diverse as advanced electronics and semiconductors, aerospace, biomedical devices, nanotechnology, alternative and sustainable energy, and advanced computation and communication technologies.

Please let us know how we can be of assistance, as you provide direction to this important topic of federal employee travel expenditures and associated guidelines.

Sincerely yours,



Tia Benson Tolle, PhD
MRS President



Todd M. Osman, PhD
MRS Executive Director

cc: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell
Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee