



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

January 24, 2014

Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Re: Hearing entitled “Examining Conference and Travel Spending Across the Federal Government”

Dear Members of the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee:

As you examine the issue of federal conference and travel spending and the progress made on oversight, the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) respectfully shares with you our concerns regarding limiting government scientist participation in scientific conferences hosted by non-profit, professional societies such as ASN. ASN has more than 5,000 members, including government scientists who conduct research to help all Americans live healthier lives, and is dedicated to bringing together the world's top researchers to advance our knowledge and application of nutrition.

ASN encourages the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee to allow greater flexibility for government scientists to participate in conferences hosted by non-profit, professional societies. ASN also requests that you allow federal support for scientific, mission-relevant conferences and allow federal agencies to host meetings that advance the national research agenda. Such conferences are a standard way for scientists to communicate and share the most up-to-date research findings with one another. Online avenues limit in-person interaction and networking that is vital to advance discovery and innovation in the field of nutrition.

Travel restrictions limit the ability of government scientists to share and receive feedback on their own work at conferences, alert new audiences to agency funding opportunities and policies, and monitor the implementation of new research programs. Conferences help government scientists stay abreast of new developments in nutrition research and determine how best to allocate government resources to support research that will have the greatest impact on the health of Americans. Conferences also provide agency staff with an opportunity to meet new collaborators whom they might recruit to the workforce, to serve on advisory panels, grant reviews, and study sections, or to present research findings at events convened by the government.

In conclusion, while ASN supports efforts to promote federal agency transparency, accountability, and efficient spending, limiting government scientist's abilities to participate in conferences has long-term repercussions for the wellbeing of all Americans. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. Please contact Sarah Ohlhorst, Director of Government Relations (sohlhorst@nutrition.org; 301.634.7281) if ASN may provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon L. Jensen".

Gordon L. Jensen, M.D., Ph.D.
2013-2014 President

9650 Rockville Pike | Bethesda, MD 20814
T: 301.634.7050 | F: 301.634.7892
info@nutrition.org | www.nutrition.org