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MIKULSKI FLOOR STATEMENT SUPPORTING POLITICAL SCIENCE RESEARCH FUNDING AT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *U.S. Senator Barbara A. Mikulski (D-Md.) today spoke on the Senate floor during debate on the fiscal year 2010 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations bill in support of funding for social science research at the National Science Foundation:*

“Mr. President, I oppose the amendment offered by the Senator from Oklahoma that eliminates \$9 million from the political science program at the National Science Foundation (NSF). I don't like targeting an individual science area for termination. Today it might be political science. Tomorrow, another Senator might target biology. Remember how we stifled science under the gag rules and gag guidelines of stem cell research?”

“Also, I don't like trivializing academic research by somehow suggesting that some science is worthwhile while other science should be minimized.

“First, I remind everyone about the important work of NSF, which has received bipartisan support. In its report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, the National Academy of Sciences pointed out that the NSF is one of our lead agencies in promoting innovation through its research and its education programs.

“This bill supports the funding for the Directorate for Social, Behavior and Economic Science, which oversees the political science office. This directorate's mission is to use basic research to understand human and institutional behavior vital to rebuilding our national infrastructure and understanding how we operate as a society.

“This program began in 1962, and over the years, it has also included an open, transparent relationship with the Department of Defense. This is not black-box research. This is out-of-the-box research, so that we can understand our world better, and deal with conflict resolution. Or when we are in a conflict, how we can work with other people around the world and build democratic societies and democratic institutions.

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“In recent news, we were awakened with great pride that two American women won the Nobel Prize. One is Dr. Greider, from Johns Hopkins University in my home state of Maryland. I talked with Dr. Greider the other day. Wow, what a great American scientist. She answered her own phone. She was going to join her daughter at a soccer game right after she had gotten the call from Stockholm. As we talked about her groundbreaking research in microbiology, she said she was able to do her work because of the grants she had received through the National Institutes of Health.

“They had helped her get her education, and they had helped her do her research. They helped her to win the Nobel Prize. But for her, she thought the prize would be a tribute to how her work in microbiology could lead to saving lives.

“We also had another woman win the Nobel Prize — Dr. Elinor Ostrom. Her training is in political science. She won the Nobel Prize for economics. She is the first woman ever to win the prize for economics — an American woman. She has received several political science grants from NSF because political science also looks at institutions that have an impact on our economy.

“Since 1974, Dr. Ostrom has received more than 20 grants at NSF, and these grants helped her do her fieldwork all over the world in relation to the economic activity of people and communities. The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences thought enough of her work to award her the Nobel Prize, but long before they heard of her in Stockholm, the National Science Foundation had heard of her and helped her with her award-winning research.

“We have to keep science going. NSF and our other scientific institutions must go where no thought has gone before. That is the point of discovery. Discovery has led to innovation. Innovation leads to the new ideas that lead to the new jobs in our society. A society that doesn't innovate stagnates. Innovation comes not only in engineering, though much needed. It doesn't only come in physics, though much desired. It doesn't come only in medicine and biological research, though much revered. New ideas also come from basic social sciences.

“As I said to the Senator from Oklahoma, for the last 8 years there has been a relationship between DOD and the NSF – again, in open, transparent research. Here, I will quote from the *Federal Technology Watch*, October 6, 2009. *Federal Technology Watch* is a weekly report on Federal technology, science, and policy areas.

“The quote is as follows: ‘\$8 million has been awarded to 17 projects by the NSF under a joint NSF/Department of Defense solicitation. The competition, Social and Behavioral Dimensions of National Security, Conflict and Cooperation, is focused on basic social and behavioral science of strategic importance to US national security policy.’ So again, the competition is in the social science directorate. Of these 17 projects, 13 were awarded for political science research.

“And the four topic areas DOD thought were important to contract through NSF are in the following areas, according to this article: ‘Authoritarian regimes, the strategic impact of religious and cultural change, terrorist organizations and ideologies, and new dimensions in national security.’

“Let me read what some of these grants are. One is experimental analysis of alternative models of conflict bargaining. Now, you might say: Ho-hum. But you know what, maybe some idea out of that research will help us crack the code on how we can bring peace to the Middle East. Another grant maps terrorist organizations. Well, that is a pretty good idea. Maybe some of that research will help us get out of Afghanistan. Another project, which touches upon an issue I am very concerned about because of my worry about the planet, is avoiding water wars. Environmental security issues like these may be new threats to the United States.

“I could read every one of these, but what I want to say is that DOD has partnered with NSF --to quote from this article – ‘to reach the broadest range of academic, social and behavioral science, and this collaboration combines the insights of DOD with the peer review expertise of NSF in support of the agencies desire to promote basic social and behavioral research in areas that will benefit the United States.’

“To take out \$9 million is really penny-wise and pound-foolish. I am going to oppose the amendment of the Senator on that issue.

“I think we have had a good discussion, and I want to reiterate the three goals of the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee. First, we want to promote the security of the American people. We want to do it over there and we want to do it here. That is why we fund the Justice Department. Second, we want to promote innovation, and we have vigorous funding for our science agencies and innovation from the government that will also be on the side of those innovators. Finally, where we do agree with the Senator from Oklahoma on another of his amendments is on increased oversight, accountability, stewardship, and transparency.”

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