AAAS urges Trump team to value science and its benefits

CEO Rush Holt leads multistrategy effort to safeguard scientists’ role in good government

By Michaela Jarvis

In letters addressed to Cabinet nominees of President-elect Donald Trump, AAAS CEO Rush Holt listed specific ways science can bolster and clarify the important work of certain federal agencies, then offered the assistance of AAAS, and its more than 100,000 members, to help ensure that science plays its important role in providing solutions to complex challenges.

“The U.S. scientific community writ large, and the AAAS in particular, are American assets at your disposal,” Holt wrote. “We look forward to working with you and your team ... to ensure that you are able to draw on high-quality scientific evidence to craft policies that best serve the American people.”

The letters sent to those chosen by Trump to head some of the nation’s most important government agencies were just one example of the ways AAAS has mobilized since the November presidential election to make sure that the voice of the science community is heard, to remind the incoming Administration of the benefits to quality of life and economic progress of scientific innovation, and to involve scientists and scientific evidence in the ongoing process of creating government policy.

On the day after the election, Holt released a statement in which he said the president-elect should appoint a respected scientist or engineer to the position of science adviser as soon as possible, in order to accomplish the goals Trump outlined in campaign promises, particularly regarding the health of the American economy and job market.

“President-elect Donald Trump must be prepared to advance science, technology, and education to drive economic progress, innovation, and jobs, and to improve people’s lives,” Holt said in the statement, which was quoted in the Washington Post.

Holt, who served 16 years as a representative to the U.S. Congress before becoming chief executive of AAAS, urged Trump to name a qualified science adviser. The message was also direct-tweeted to the president-elect and provoked mentions in many publications, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, Motherboard, and the Huffington Post.

To help the scientific community stay informed about transition news and AAAS engagement, AAAS has launched a special online information hub, aaas.org/election-transition, which will be updated throughout the first 100 days of the new Administration. The information center offers everything from background on the Cabinet nominees and information regarding the role that science plays at each agency and department to recent science-related editorials on the transition, updates regarding the Senate confirmation hearings, a rundown of articles from Science
related to the transition, and a link to the information needed for individuals to contact members of Congress. Soon, the AAAS team will launch an email newsletter with science-related news about the new Administration, which will be available through a sign-up process hosted on the website. AAAS also created an opportunity for members to contribute ideas for questions that could be asked during Cabinet nomination hearings via the AAAS Trellis website (trelliscience.com).

Meanwhile, the 2017 AAAS Annual Meeting, to be held in Boston 16–20 February, will offer resources to scientists and aspiring scientists wanting to communicate their research results effectively to the public and government. The meeting, with the theme Serving Society Through Science Policy, will bring together top experts in informing policy with scientific evidence. The program includes a workshop entitled “Catalyzing Advocacy in Science and Engineering” for students interested in the role of science in policy-making, offering advice for how to advocate for research throughout their careers. Another offering provides all symposia speakers and moderators with a free Presentation Rx communication consultation to hone their methods for explaining their research and why it is important.

As Holt said in a 20 December Motherboard editorial directed to young scientists, groups such as AAAS offer opportunities for scientists and engineers to engage in policy, methods for advocacy and engagement, and communication training—in other words, the tools to maximize the impact of their work.

“The promise of science to uplift the next generation of innovators, drive prosperity, and ease human suffering is a powerful message,” Holt wrote. “So, speak up. Keep focused. Carry on.”

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**Results of the 2016 election of AAAS officers**

**GENERAL ELECTION**

**President-Elect:** Margaret A. Hamburg, National Academy of Medicine

**Board of Directors:** Sylvester James Gates, Jr., University of Maryland, College Park; Kaye Husbands Fealing, Georgia Institute of Technology

**Committee on Nominations:** Patricia Falcone, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory; Margaret Leinon, Scripps Institution of Oceanography/UCSD; Shirley M. Tilghman, Princeton University; Elias Zerhouni, Sanofi Inc.

**SECTION ELECTIONS**

**Agriculture, Food, and Renewable Resources**

Chair Elect: Sarah Hake, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Esther van der Knaap, University of Georgia

Electorate Nominating Committee: Joan K. Lunnay, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service; Lydia P. Olander, Duke University

**Anthropology**

Chair Elect: Agustin Fuentes, University of Notre Dame

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Patricia M. Lambert, Utah State University

Electorate Nominating Committee: Yohannes Haile-Selassie, Cleveland Museum of Natural History/Case Western Reserve University; Fiona B. Marshall, Washington University in St. Louis

**Astronomy**

Chair Elect: Bradley M. Peterson, Ohio State University

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Joan Centrella, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Goddard Space Flight Center

Electorate Nominating Committee: Eileen D. Friel, Indiana University; Chris Impey, University of Arizona

**Atmospheric and Hydrospheric Sciences**

Chair Elect: Philip Rasch, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Nancy N. Rabalais, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium/Louisiana State University

Electorate Nominating Committee: David W. Lea, University of California, Santa Barbara; Michael Oppenheimer, Princeton University

Council Delegate: Diane E. Wickland, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (retired)

**Biological Sciences**

Chair Elect: Michael Lynch, Indiana University

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Caroline S. Harwood, University of Washington

Electorate Nominating Committee: M. Kathryn Barton, Carnegie Institution for Science/Stanford University; David L. Stern, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Janelia Research Campus

Council Delegate: Jonathan A. Eisen, University of California, Davis

**Chemistry**

Chair Elect: Susan M. Kauzlarich, University of California, Davis

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Robert G. Bergman, University of California, Berkeley/Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory

Electorate Nominating Committee: Nancy E. Levinger, Colorado State University; Tina M. Nenoff, Sandia National Laboratories

**Dentistry and Oral Health Sciences**

Chair Elect: Pamela K. Den Besten, University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Robert A. Burne, University of Florida College of Dentistry

**Engineering**

Chair Elect: Deb Niemeier, University of California, Davis

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Norma A. Alcantar, University of South Florida

Electorate Nominating Committee: Sheryl H. Ehrman, University of Maryland, College Park; Rodney D. Priestley, Princeton University

Council Delegate: Ian M. Robertson, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Education**

Chair Elect: Susan Rundell Singer, Rollins College

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: Linda M. Grisham, Massachusetts Bay Community College

Electorate Nominating Committee: James J. Smith, Michigan State University; Juliana Texley, Central Michigan University

Council Delegate: Jay B. Labov, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

**Geology and Geography**

Chair Elect: Janet Franklin, Arizona State University

**General Interest in Science and Engineering**

Chair Elect: Katherine E. Rowan, George Mason University

Member-at-Large of the Section Committee: David Berube, North Carolina State University

Electorate Nominating Committee: Marielle Long, Colorado State University; Kevin J. Niemi, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Council Delegate: JoAnn M. Valenti, Brigham Young University (Emeritus)
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