The beginning of a new year is always an occasion for reflection, both on where you’ve been and where you’re going. As the Science Policy Office looks back on 2016, we see a year of hard work and active engagement. As we look ahead to 2017, we see a new administration and fresh opportunities to link scientific breakthroughs fueled by federally funded research to innovations that drive the economy and create American jobs.

Looking Back

Last year got off to a hopeful start with a strong budget proposal from President Obama. Food, agriculture, and natural resources research did well in the president’s budget request. The USDA competitive grants program, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), received the fully authorized amount of $700 million, doubling the funding amount for this program.

Using the president’s support as the foundation for our advocacy efforts during the spring, ASA, CSSA and SSSA worked to secure a $25 million increase for AFRI in both the House and Senate appropriations bills. Other research funding agencies like the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy Office of Science also saw small funding increases in their respective appropriations bills.

Unfortunately, the budget process stalled in the summer when Congress returned home to campaign. In late September, Congress passed a short-term continuing resolution that held government funding steady through 9 December, with the hope of completing the appropriations process for fiscal year 2017 after the election.

The election of Republican nominee, Donald Trump, however, had a significant impact on the momentum of the appropriations process. Republicans in Congress decided they would rather work with the new Trump administration in 2017 and then try to pass an end-of-year omnibus spending package through the waning months of Obama’s presidency. Just before the holidays, Congress passed a second CR, which will maintain current government funding through 28 April.

Long-term CRs are particularly hard on federal agencies and the researchers who rely on federal grants to do their work. There is also a concern that the funding increases proposed for research programs might not materialize when the final appropriations negotiations take place in the spring—if, in fact, they do take place. It is possible that Congress will elect to continue the CR through the end of the fiscal year.

Looking Ahead

With President-elect Trump set to take office in just a few weeks, there is still much we just don’t know about what the Trump administration will look like, especially with regard to research. Discussion of science and research topics were virtually non-existent during the campaign, and the president-elect has no policy background to look to as an indication of his administration’s priorities.

One thing is clear: Our success depends on our ability to show how taxpayer-financed research leads to new industries, small businesses, and the creation of well-paying jobs for Americans. We must do a better job of demonstrating the economic outcomes of research. As President Clinton’s chief political strategist once said—“It’s the economy, stupid.”

One topic that is particularly important to many of our members is that of climate change. Trump’s stance on climate change has been a bit of a mixed bag. He has a history of being critical of climate change and has promised to roll back environmental regulations. That stance may have softened a bit in the weeks since the election. In recent interviews,