Science Policy News

2017: A Year in Review

This year was certainly an interesting one in the policy world. A new administration brought new leadership, new priorities, new challenges, and new opportunities. As the Science Policy Offices looks back on 2017, we see a year of advocacy activities that allowed Society members to engage with policymakers and make their voices heard.

Congressional gridlock didn’t stop ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members from engaging in several successful advocacy campaigns informing Congress and the administration about our priorities. The annual Congressional Visits Day (CVD) event brought 70 Society members and Certified Crop Advisers to Washington, DC to advocate for food, agriculture, and natural resources research funding. Advocates at CVD asked members to sign on to a “Dear Colleague” letter in support of the USDA competitive grants program, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). Sixty-seven House members signed the bipartisan letter, including 20 members of the House Agriculture Committee.

Fending Off Significant Budget Cuts

Though the AFRI program was one specific request the Societies focused on, we also worked to build support for food, agriculture, and natural resources research across federal agencies. President Trump’s first budget request proposed significant budget cuts to most nondefense federal spending, including research programs within the USDA, the National Science Foundation, and the Department of Energy–Office of Science. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, along with hundreds of other scientific, industry, and educational groups, opposed the proposed cuts to federal research programs and worked with Congress to ensure those cuts would not be enacted.

Through coalition letters, congressional meetings, and constituent engagement, we worked to show members of Congress the negative impact these cuts would have to our nation’s innovation capacity, national security, economic growth, and international competitiveness. And our efforts paid off. Congress ultimately rejected the cuts proposed in the Trump budget.

New Advocacy Platform for Members

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA started using a new advocacy platform which more easily allows Society members to reach out to Congress and the administration on policy issues. Society members were asked to contact their representatives and encourage them to join the newly formed House Agriculture Research Caucus. The caucus now has 25 members. At the Annual Meeting asking attendees to sign a petition urging the administration to nominate a respected member of the scientific community to serve as Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. More than 600 Society members signed the petition; a successful effort!