

(May 2, 2007) Lipinski Supports Improving Scientists Communication Skills

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI (D-IL) U.S. House of Representatives Matsui Amendment to H.R. 1867, National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2007 May 2, 2007 I rise in support of this amendment to provide competitive grants to institutions to help scientists improve their communications skills.

As Members of Congress, we all understand just how crucial communications skills are, whether we are trying to influence our colleagues during floor debate or we are trying to explain a vote to our constituents. If you cannot communicate effectively, the value of your ideas and all the work you do can easily be lost. The same is true for our nation's scientists as they attempt to convey their work to their colleagues and especially to non-scientific audiences.

This afternoon when I had the opportunity to speak with the five recent American Nobel Laureate scientists, I was very impressed with their abilities to explain their work. I may even say I was surprised, because, unfortunately, scientists are not always the most gifted speakers, and this is not a skill that we find taught in graduate schools today. I speak from experience, both as an engineer and as a former professor. And perhaps some would say that I personally provide evidence supporting this generalization. So the Matsui amendment addresses this problem by helping to provide training for our nation's young scientists, producing a pipeline of scientists trained in conveying complex, scientific knowledge to their peers and to non-scientists, including policymakers, business leaders, and others. If NSF-funded scientists are better able to explain their groundbreaking research, policymakers will be in a better position to make well-informed decisions about the best paths to follow, enabling all Americans to benefit from this research. And perhaps some business leaders will better be able to turn some academics' research into marketable products.

Finally, I believe that the ability of our scientists to more effectively communicate scientific information will inspire more children to pursue a career in science. No one is inspired by what they don't know because they are unable to understand. I thank Congresswoman Matsui for offering this amendment and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting it. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.