

ACLS Statement on OMB Proposal for New Criteria and Process for Federal Science Research Grants

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The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) stands in solidarity with members of the science community in strongly opposing the Office of Management and Budget's proposal for new criteria and process for federal funding for scientific research.

What the administration is trying to present as an effort to eliminate waste and fraud is another attack on the production and dissemination of knowledge that puts our communities, our nation, and our planet at risk.

For more than 80 years, federal research funds have been vital to accelerating advancements that have changed the world, from the Salk polio vaccine in the 1950s, to leaps in computer technology in the 1960s, the transformation of HIV from a fatal diagnosis into a manageable chronic condition in the 1990s, and the groundbreaking Human Genome Project in the early- and mid-2000s – to name just a few.

In every instance, peer review has been a cornerstone of the research, ensuring quality control through independent analysis. The new rules place peer review below political ideology in making funding decisions and gives politicians the power to cut projects regardless of their merit.

The proposed restrictions on international exchange via support for H1B visa researchers, including those from China, send a direct message to our research communities that the development of new scientific knowledge is not a priority of this administration. These students, teachers, scientists, and researchers are vital to US colleges and universities. When they stop coming to the United States, our ability to move quickly in the face of crisis will be diminished and our leadership in science, technology, and public health will be severely weakened.

Let us be clear: research must not be under the thumb of politicians.

ACLS recently won a lawsuit against the National Endowment for the Humanities to restore illegally terminated federal funding for research and public programming in the humanities and social sciences on the grounds

that political litmus tests cannot displace peer review. The bottom line, according to the federal judge ruling in our case: viewpoint discrimination directly violates the First Amendment of the Constitution. Precisely because we are committed to the OMB's stated goals of "transparency, accountability, and proper oversight," we oppose these new rules.

We encourage our community members to stand in solidarity with our colleagues in the sciences by [submitting public comments](#) on the OMB's proposed Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance by July 13, 2026. We also encourage our community and supporters to add comments to the [Stand Up for Science advocacy page](#) as a show of support.

****ACLS recognizes that many of the provisions in the proposed rule would also impact humanities funding, including those that would expand the authority to cancel already awarded grants, codify prohibitions on gender and sexuality studies, and restrict the use of funds for publishing and conference attendance.***

ACLS Member Societies and Affiliates

African Studies Association
American Academy of Religion
American Anthropological Association
American Association of Geographers
American Folklore Society
American Musicological Society
American Political Science Association
American Society for Environmental History
American Sociological Association
Association of University Presses
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Austrian Studies Association
College Art Association
Council for European Studies
German Studies Association
International Society for Third Sector Research
Linguistic Society of America
Middle East Studies Association
National Council on Public History
North American Conference on British Studies
North American Victorian Studies Association
Society for Architectural Historians
Society of Biblical Literature

