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The Honorable Sethuraman Panchanathan
Director
National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Director Panchanathan,

Maintaining and strengthening America's global leadership in science is imperative to both our national and economic security and when I travel to schools across Iowa I am reassured we have an unmatched wealth of brain power, talent, and creativity necessary to achieve these goals by each of the bright young minds I meet.

To provide support, Congress has made a significant funding commitment to research and development, [totaling nearly \\$180 billion last year](#) alone. But simply spending billions of dollars won't guarantee groundbreaking scientific breakthroughs if those resources are misdirected, and, unfortunately, there have been more than enough examples of that over the years.

The latest to come to my attention is an initiative supported by NSF that is [steering more than \\$5 million](#) of taxpayer dollars to a group called [Hack/Hackers](#). The money will be spent to make lists of organizations and media that the public should and should not be trust and encourage everyday Americans to police the social media of friends and family members and confront their acquaintances who post unapproved ideas.

Oddly enough, the World Health Organization (WHO), which has been a willing accomplice of the communist Chinese government's efforts to obstruct the investigations into the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic, is part of this effort to patrol what information is considered "reliable" or "conspiracy." WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has gone as far as [saying](#), "We appreciate the seriousness with which China is taking this outbreak, especially the commitment from top leadership, and the transparency they have demonstrated, including sharing data and genetic sequence of the virus." Also bending to China's propaganda machine, a WHO representatives not only [announced](#) it was "extremely unlikely" that COVID-19 might have been leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which was conducting dangerous studies on coronaviruses in the very city where the pandemic began, but that a lab leak "isn't a hypothesis we suggest implies further study." Does NSF believe *these* are credible statements based on reliable facts and sound scientific evidence?

It is very disappointing that taxpayer dollars would be spent on this project when our nation is facing a [dire shortage of STEM teachers](#) who are vital to inspiring others to pursue careers in the sciences.

And we really do not need a return to the dark days when some in Washington maintained an "enemies lists" of fellow citizens and journalists with opposing viewpoints. Instead, the NSF would much better serve taxpayers by supporting our nation's bright young minds with initiatives to improve math and science education rather than these efforts to troll taxpayers online.

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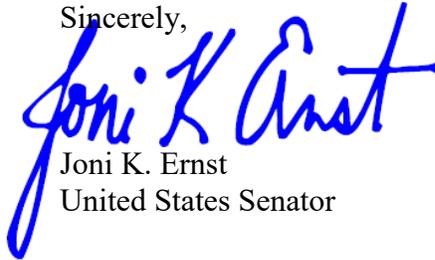
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Again, after seeing firsthand the scientific endeavors underway right now in Iowa that hold such great promise to improve the food, energy, environment, health, and technology of our nation and the world, I really cannot believe that NSF could not find more deserving initiatives to support with the millions of taxpayer dollars being put towards this effort.

I would encourage you to reconsider the millions of dollars being made available for Hack/Hackers by this grant and redirect those resources towards more worthy efforts that support students, teachers, and researchers whose endeavors will truly help America remain as the world's leader in science.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joni K. Ernst". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator