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Communicating Science in the Capitol: The Graduate Student Voice

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Fundamental scientific research, as a majority federally funded initiative, is becoming more deeply embedded in politics. Since the end of the Space Race, funding of basic physical sciences research as a percent GDP has continuously declined, indicating that policy makers see funding scientific research as less of a priority than they once did. A lack of understanding about both science and how science is done amongst members of Congress has led to both reduced prioritization and also to misguided attempts at regulation, such as making peer review a public process and considering Congressional oversight for specific grants. Here we will examine a few current issues in science policy, the effect on graduate students, and why the student voice is effective. We will also consider the positive or negative effects such public engagement may have on our scientific careers and ways in which you can get involved.