To the Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide the American Geosciences Institute's perspective on fiscal year (FY) 2013 appropriations for geoscience programs within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. The President's budget request for the Department of Energy (DOE) research programs provides important and modest investments in research and development (R&D) that will help develop and sustain energy resources for economic growth of resilient communities. **AGI strongly supports the wise investments in the Office of Science [$5 billion] and Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy [$2.3 billion].** AGI requests at least $5 million in additional funding for the Science Graduate Fellowship Program within the Office of Science’s Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists [$14.5 million FY 2013 request] which are zeroed out in the President's proposal.

AGI is concerned about the limited investments in oil and natural gas R&D within the Office of Fossil Energy. Oil and natural gas supply 62% of our nation’s energy and will continue to play a major role in the future. These investments will drive innovation to support and improve safe and effective domestic development of cleaner fossil fuels. The bulk of DOE’s oil and gas R&D investments go to institutions of higher education for training and research. The U.S. has a substantial workforce and significant investments in oil and natural gas research, development, exploration and production. Steady, but modest federal investments in fossil energy R&D with a longer term strategic plan would benefit the academic, private and public sectors.

The Office of Fossil Energy suffers from an unbalanced portfolio that focuses primarily on coal, faces uncertainty about direction and investments, and receives inconsistent funding. We ask for the Subcommittee’s support for oil and gas, unconventional natural gas, methane hydrates and carbon sequestration R&D so the nation can develop a diverse portfolio of energy resources while enhancing carbon mitigation strategies to secure clean, affordable and secure energy supplies for now and the future.

AGI is a nonprofit federation of 50 geoscientific and professional societies representing more than 250,000 geologists, geophysicists, and other Earth scientists. Founded in 1948, AGI provides information services to geoscientists, serves as a voice for shared interests in our profession, plays a major role in strengthening geoscience education, and strives to increase public awareness of the vital role the geosciences play in society's use of resources, resilience to hazards, and the health of the environment.
DOE Office of Science

The DOE Office of Science is the single largest supporter of basic research in the physical sciences in the United States, providing more than 40 percent of total funding for this vital area of national importance. The Office of Science manages fundamental research programs in basic energy sciences, biological and environmental sciences, and computational science and, under the budget request, would receive $5 billion in FY 2013. AGI asks that you support this funding level.

The President’s request would provide $14.5 million for Workforce Development for Teachers and Scientists, a program aimed at ensuring that DOE and the nation have a sustained pipeline of highly skilled and diverse science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workers. AGI strongly supports investments in geoscience education, training and workforce development within DOE and other federal agencies. We are concerned that the request is $5 million less than FY2012 enacted and that DOE proposes no funding for the Science Graduate Fellowship program. We would encourage support for graduate student fellowships through DOE to allow students to complete advanced training and to ensure a skilled workforce in energy-related sciences.

DOE Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Within Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, the President’s FY 2013 budget request would increase investments for R&D for many renewable energy resources. AGI applauds the $65 million requested for geothermal R&D and greatly appreciates previous support from Congress for this key alternative energy resource. The geothermal research program within the Renewable Energy account, which funds Earth science research in materials, geofluids, geochemistry, geophysics, rock properties, reservoir modeling, and seismic mapping, will provide the nation with the best research to build a successful and competitive geothermal industry. AGI supports the Energy Innovation Hub focused on critical materials and hope this hub will consider ways to improve exploration, extraction and processing of necessary raw materials as well as replacement materials.

DOE Fossil Energy Research and Development

AGI urges the Subcommittee to provide more balanced support for the Fossil Energy Research and Development (R&D) portfolio in the FY 2013 Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill. Many members of Congress have strongly emphasized the need for a responsible, diversified and comprehensive energy policy for the nation. The growing global competition for fossil fuels has led to a repeated and concerted request by Congress to ensure the nation’s energy security. The President’s proposal, which provides no funding for oil R&D or for unconventional fossil energy, is short sighted and inconsistent with congressional and public concerns. No funding for oil and unconventional fossil energy R&D will hinder our ability to achieve energy stability and security.
The research dollars invested in petroleum R&D go primarily to universities, state geological surveys and research consortia to address critical issues like enhanced recovery from known fields and unconventional sources that are the future of our natural gas supply. This money does not go into corporate coffers, but it helps American businesses remain competitive by giving them a technological edge over foreign companies. All major advances in oil and gas production can be tied to research and technology. AGI strongly encourages the Subcommittee to ensure a balanced and diversified energy research portfolio that does not ignore the nation’s primary sources of energy for the near future, fossil fuels.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to the subcommittee. If you would like any additional information for the record, please contact Linda Rowan at 703-379-2480, ext. 228 voice, 703-379-7563 fax, rowan@agiweb.org, or 4220 King Street, Alexandria VA 22302-1502.