



## Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance

**Thomas F. Remington**, Emory University

Dear Director Vought,

I write to comment on the proposed Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance (OMB-2026-0034; FR Doc. 2026-10817). In my view, the proposed rule would be destructive to the long-term capacity of the United States to benefit from advances in scientific and technological research in an increasingly competitive global environment.

I am a retired professor of political science. For many decades I studied the political system of the Soviet Union and then the Russian Republic. I have published numerous books and articles, among them the leading academic textbook on Russian politics (*Politics in Russia*, which appeared in multiple editions) and a book on Soviet communist party control over communications (*The Truth of Authority*, 1988). I investigated the collapse of the communist system and the rise of an authoritarian postcommunist system. My research was supported by federal research grants, including from the National Science Foundation. My decades of professional experience have made me acutely aware of the damage that the politicization of scholarly research does to the vitality and survival of a government.

Communist party control over politically independent social science in the Soviet Union led directly to the loss of feedback for the central government and contributed directly to the collapse of the entire regime. For example, when the Soviet regime denounced cybernetics as a "reactionary pseudoscience," it set back Soviet computer science by decades. When ideological dogma replaces non-partisan and objective information, policy makers are unable to steer the country. Plans to restrict research methods and topics (§200.205, §200.218, §200.300) and to make funding decisions based on ideological rather than academic criteria (§200.205, §200.340) mirror the Soviet Union's politicization of research. If this proposed rule is enacted, it will have the same detrimental effect on basic information feedback mechanisms that communist party ideological control had in the Soviet system.

Note also that a government that politicizes the mechanisms for support of scientific and technological research by destroying the independence of the peer review process—as the proposed change to §200.205 would do—is putting a loaded weapon into the hands of a successor regime. If today research grants must be approved by a political appointee named by the current administration, tomorrow a different appointee might well decide to only approve grants favoring the opposing camp. The credibility of scholarly research can only be guaranteed by ensuring that it is independent of political favoritism. The only way to do that is by the peer review process, free of political interference from any side. The demotion of peer review to "advisory" recommendations that should not be "routinely deferred to" would endanger the credibility of the scholarship that our government funds, thereby imperiling our nation's position as a global research leader.

Ultimately, it is the strength of American research in science and technology that has enabled our country to maintain its dominant position in the world. The commitment to a robust, independent research establishment funded by government but administered through the peer review process has kept this country in the lead globally. In the last few years that dominance has eroded and now it is threatened by the attempt to extend direct White House control over federal funding of research. The U.S. stands in danger of losing its proud position globally, just as the Soviet Union fell further and further back until the very system collapsed.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Remington