

April 2, 2004

Hon. Charles H. Taylor, Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior  
B308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6023

Hon. Norman Dicks, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior  
B308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC. 20515-6023

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

As you begin consideration of the FY05 budget for the Advanced National Seismic System (ANSS), we ask that you consider a funding level of at least \$10 million for this important program. The ANSS, an integrated seismic monitoring network that will be concentrated in high-seismic risk urban areas, was authorized in 2000 as part of the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP), but has been funded at only about one-eighth of the authorized level (\$4.4 million in FY04).

We have growing concerns that continued under-funding of the program will substantially limit the ability of NEHRP to mitigate earthquake hazards. While we would much prefer to see the program funded at its authorized level of \$35 million, we understand that may not be possible in this budget environment. However, by funding ANSS at least \$10 million, the program will be able to move ahead with the bare minimum of implementation necessary to learn from the next significant earthquake.

The need for ANSS cannot be disputed. Much of the seismographic equipment currently being used today is over 30 years old, and cannot reach the level of precision and scope of modern equipment. The ANSS provides an equipment upgrade, and harnesses modern telecommunications and robust centralized computer processing to provide a nationwide uniform minimum standard for earthquake monitoring.

The data that ANSS provides will be crucial for citizens, emergency responders, engineers, and government officials. With modern equipment, the USGS can develop detailed "shakemaps," which provide a precise geographic measurement of shaking intensity during an actual earthquake. The ANSS will provide important information to emergency management officials in the moments following an earthquake to determine where to dispatch first responders. The ANSS will also yield important data to help engineers design buildings to prevent the future loss of life in earthquakes, as well as important information on fundamental earthquake processes to earth scientists trying to better understand why and how earthquakes occur.

As originally conceived, the ANSS calls for expenditures of \$170 million over a five-year period for equipment, plus additional maintenance costs. In reality, however, funding levels have fallen far short of this figure, and the Administration's request of \$1.9 million for FY 2004 is the lowest level yet. If this trend were to continue, the ANSS would not be completed for another fifty years.

The United States Geological Survey puts the likelihood of a magnitude 6.7 earthquake occurring in the San Francisco Bay Area by 2032 at 62%. Those of us in the Western United States know all too well the high costs in terms of human life and property of such a large earthquake. However, this problem is not limited only to California, the state most often associated with America's earthquake threats. Many other parts of the country, including the Mississippi River valley, Pacific Northwest, Intermountain West, Alaska, Hawaii and parts of the eastern seaboard face significant earthquake risks. In fact, seventy-five million people, including forty-six million outside California, live in metropolitan areas in the United States at moderate to high earthquake risk.

The time to properly fund ANSS is now. We can't afford to wait for the next big earthquake to start providing this badly needed funding. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

---

Nick Smith  
Member of Congress

---

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress