

MRS Contributes to Sound Science Policy

One of the most important services that the Materials Research Society provides its members is communication with the federal government in support of sound science policy. The year 2008 was an exceptionally active time for MRS in this area, as the Society pursued opportunities to counsel policymakers on Capitol Hill through congressional visits, issue letters of support or informed opinion to policymakers, and collaborate with sister societies and other advocacy organizations when a larger voice for science was needed.

MRS weighed in on critical issues such as FY2008 supplemental funding for science (which was passed); scientific, technical, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education; reauthorization of the National Nanotechnology Initiatives and the America COMPETES Act; and the President's FY2009 budget, with particular focus on the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Department of Defense, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

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For more than 10 years, MRS has sponsored a Science and Engineering Congressional Fellow in partnership with the Optical Society of America (OSA). In 2008, we undertook sponsorship of a second Fellowship—the Materials Societies



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Science and Engineering Congressional Fellowship—in partnership with The Minerals, Metals and Materials Society (TMS) and the American Ceramic Society (ACerS). Each Fellowship provides financial support for a scientist to work for one year in a congressional office or congressional committee in Washington D.C., where their scientific knowledge and research skills can contribute to sound policy decisions. Alicia Jackson, 2007–2008 MRS/OSA Fellow, held a position in the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee; 2008–2009 MRS/OSA Fellow Amit Mistry is serving in the office of Representative Edward Markey, and 2008–2009 Materials Societies Fellow

Ticora Jones is serving in the office of Senator Russell Feingold.

Prior to the Nov. 4 U.S. presidential election, MRS endorsed a request for a presidential debate on science policy. In preparation for the new Administration, MRS has endorsed the idea of a cabinet-level position of Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, has initiated a panel of senior scientists to recommend candidates for science positions in the new Administration, and has signed a petition for the next president outlining basic energy research needs.

Led by the MRS Government Affairs Committee, MRS's advocacy efforts have been far-reaching, consistent, and unbiased, building both trust and respect on "the Hill" and within government agencies.

The current economic climate and change in Administration will pose many challenges for MRS and its members, whose research priorities are critically affected by both federal and international mandates. MRS intends to expand its communication and information to policymakers, being vigilant in maintaining its position as an unbiased source of scientific perspective.

To help connect MRS members in the process, we will continue to engage MRS members in the dialogue and awareness through such activities as Congressional Visit Day and Materials Voice—the MRS letter-writing service, government agency and science policy sessions at MRS Meetings, ongoing advocacy partnerships with other scientific organizations, and expanded coverage of policy matters in the *MRS Bulletin*. And if you are not already a subscriber to the periodic e-newsletter, Public Affairs Alert, I urge you to sign up today to receive periodic updates and analyses of policy matters (go to Special Newsletters and Alerts in "My MRS" on the MRS Web site at www.mrs.org).

By serving as a resource on science to the new Administration and Congress in 2009, MRS will continue to further its mission of the advancement of interdisciplinary materials research to improve the quality of life.

Cynthia A. Volkert
2008 MRS President

Web Sites and Documents on Policy Activities

MRS Government Affairs Committee
www.mrs.org/government-affairs-com

Materials Voice
www.mrs.org/materialsvoice

MRS Science and Engineering Congressional Fellowships
www.mrs.org/congressionalfellow

President-Elect Obama's Plan for Science and Innovation
www.usinnovation.org/files/ObamaSciencePlan111208.pdf

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