Speaking to Power

Influencing government policies that impact U.S. IEEE members is a primary function of IEEE-USA. But, many IEEE members don't understand what IEEE-USA government relations does. This article is meant to give some insight into our government relations activities and to invite you to participate.

The Government Relations Council (GRC) reports to the IEEE-USA Board of Directors through the IEEE-USA Vice President-Government Relations. The GRC advances IEEE-USA's public policy goals and capabilities by providing direction and oversight of IEEE-USA's government relations programs and committees. Its functions include recommending IEEE-USA's annual public policy priorities and legislative agenda, and reviewing position statements and whitepapers proposed to the IEEE-USA Board of Directors for adoption. These must be approved by the IEEE-USA Board of Directors in order to become official IEEE-USA public policy.

Policies are developed by various public policy committees, often in cooperation with others. IEEE-USA always is looking for volunteers to serve on its public policy committees and is open to creating new committees, when appropriate. Current policy committees are

- *Artificial Intelligence & Autonomous Systems* supports strengthening the nation's artificial intelligence capabilities by increasing research, developing suitable laws and regulations, addressing workforce needs, and aiding public understanding.
- *Communications* addresses issues such as digital privacy, spectrum policy, and cybersecurity. It interacts with Congress and federal agencies, including the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission.
- *Energy* provides a comprehensive strategy for improving the nation's electrical infrastructure, including diverse power generation methods, an intelligent grid, physical and cybersecurity, and a well-qualified work force.
- *Entrepreneurship & Innovation* champions legislation and regulation to aid small businesses.
- *Intellectual Property* recommends policies to balance the patent and copyright interests of businesses and customers, through both legislative proposals and Amicus Curiae briefs to federal courts.
- Research & Development promotes increased federal investment in science and engineering research, revitalized U.S. high-tech manufacturing, STEM education, and related topics.
- *STEM Diversity* formulates and advocates policies that increase STEM diversity and ethical treatment of STEM professionals and students.
- *Transportation and Aerospace* addresses the national space program, national aeronautics program, space-based remote sensing, intelligent transportation systems, and safety of autonomous transportation.

The annual IEEE-USA Congressional Visits Day provides volunteers a structured opportunity to interact with their Senators and Representatives. Nearly 70 IEEE

members received training last spring on effectively communicating with Congress and put that training into practice the next day while visiting their Members of Congress.
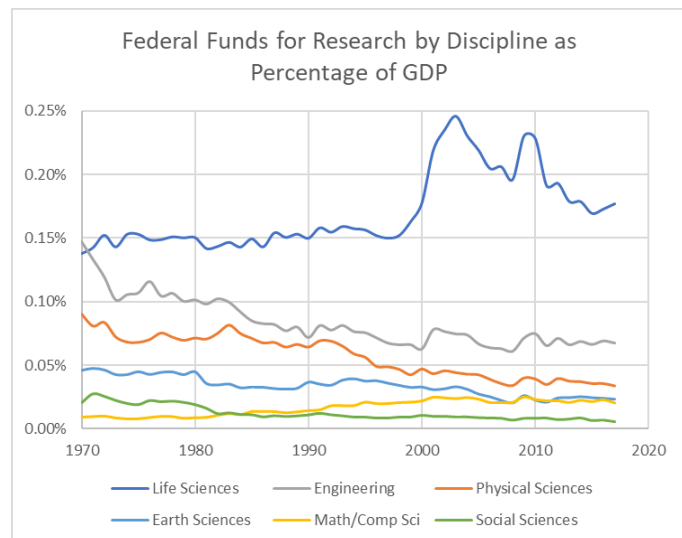
IEEE-USA also funds year-long [fellowships](#) that place well qualified volunteers in Congressional and State Dept. offices, and sponsors [WISE](#) summer internships in Washington for engineering students.

The GRC works with IEEE-USA staff, who interact regularly with members of Congress and the Administration to advance IEEE-USA public policy objectives. Among recent successes are

- Preserving federal basic research funding
- Establishing IEEE as trusted AI advisor
- Reversing federal S&E conference attendance restrictions
- Making the R&D tax credit permanent
- Reducing tax bill impact on graduate students

For example, [federal support of engineering and physical sciences](#) decreased by a factor of two relative to the Gross Domestic Product before IEEE-USA and other professional societies succeeded in convincing Congress to stop this steady slide. Now, we are working diligently to restore research funding to its 1970 percentage in order to increase the nation's economic productivity.

Our AI program, on the other hand, has focused on developing effective relationships with government decision-makers, responding to requests for policy input, and providing public presentations.

In addition to continuing efforts in support of fundamental research and of artificial intelligence, current GRC priorities include:

- Encouraging STEM diversity and harassment prevention
- Advocating effective digital privacy and cybersecurity
- Improving electrical generation, distribution, and security
- Eliminating H1-B visa abuse while increasing legitimate EB Green Cards
- Reforming patent protection for technologists and small businesses
- Setting the U.S. future course in space
- Strengthening the SBIR/STTR program

You can find out more about IEEE-USA Government Relations at https://insight.ieeeusa.org/articles/volunteer-opportunities-ieee-usa-government-relations/. To volunteer, contact brendan.godfrey@ieee.org and r.t.harrison@ieee.org

Tom Coughlin
IEEE-USA President