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The Oceanography Society was founded in 1988 to disseminate knowledge of oceanography and its application through research and education, to promote communication among oceanographers, and to provide a constituency for consensus-building across all the disciplines of the field.

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Extolling the Benefits of Ocean Science

With recent legislation requiring reductions in the federal budget, ocean sciences funding will come under increased scrutiny. In order to make the public and our elected leaders more aware of the value of ocean sciences, there is no better time than now for us to increase our efforts in outreach, education, and advocacy. Many of us have learned to increase our public outreach through the “Broader Impacts” of our National Science Foundation (NSF) research grants (<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf>). We have developed better websites, blogs, and press releases so that teachers, students, and the general public can learn about our research. We have worked with undergraduate summer interns through the NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program. Many of you have interacted with K–12 students or with middle and high school science teachers through the NSF Centers for Ocean Science Excellence (COSEE) Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Bay-Watershed Education and Training Program (BWET). All of these programs are great ways to increase appreciation for the ocean sciences, but we need to do more.

A more direct way to influence the budget process is to make your opinions about the importance of ocean sciences known to your legislative representatives. Take the time to write or talk with your local representative about your work and the importance of ocean sciences funding. Participate through your scientific societies on public policy forums, and join in their efforts to influence the budgetary process for stable funding in the ocean sciences. This work is crucial to maintain funding and excellence in the years ahead.

One way to keep up to date on important ocean policies and legislation is through the Consortium of Ocean Leadership (COL; <http://www.oceanleadership.org/ocean-policy-legislation>). COL is an effective voice for our oceanographic institutions in Washington, DC, and it enlists the help of the oceanographic community for congressional hearings on important oceanographic legislation. *Oceanography* now has an ocean policy column in most issues that provides up-to-date information on a diverse array of policy issues affecting the oceanographic community. You may have seen the recent release of the draft National Ocean Policy Implementation Plan (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/oceans>). I hope that you take time to look over this document and provide comments and suggestions.

These opportunities are but a few of the many ways to get involved in public outreach, education, and advocacy for oceanography. What you choose to do depends on your own particular affinities, talents, and availability, but rest assured that whatever efforts you make can help sustain ocean sciences for the future.


Mike Roman, TOS President