

Dear Henry:

It is my pleasure to strongly endorse your nomination of Dr. Charles M. Vest, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for the National Medal of Technology. Dr. Vest has not only had a distinguished career as a teacher, scholar, and academic leader, but during the past decade he has been as influential as anyone in this nation in sustaining the important relationship between the federal government and the nation's research universities so critical to our technological future.

As a former dean of engineering and provost at the University of Michigan and then as president of MIT, it was understandable that Dr. Vest's leadership would have had major impact on engineering education and university research. However, it is my belief, that his most significant contribution has been his tireless and effective effort to redefine and reshape the critical relationship between the federal government and higher education that has undergirded this nation's technological strength.

A half-century ago, the seminal report, *Science, the Endless Frontier*, produced by a World War II study group chaired by Vannevar Bush, stressed the importance of this partnership: "Since health, well-being, and security are proper concerns of government, scientific progress is, and must be, of vital interest to government." This partnership has had extraordinary impact. It has made America the world's leading source of fundamental scientific knowledge. It has also produced the well-trained scientists, engineers, and other professionals capable of applying this new knowledge.

Yet world and the structure of academic research have changed greatly since Vannevar Bush wrote his report. The driving force of national security has weakened and, along with it, much of the motivation for major public investment. While there are numerous societal concerns, such as economic competitiveness, national health care, crime, and K-12 education, none of these has yet assumed an urgency sufficient to set new priorities for public investments. Furthermore, much of the existing intellectual infrastructure, developed to underpin national defense—the national laboratory system, corporate research laboratories, and the research universities—is now at risk.

Dr. Vest has been tireless in his efforts to redefine the research partnership so critical to our nation so that it addresses the concerns of a new era. He has stressed that now more than ever before, the national interest calls for an investment in human and intellectual capital. Echoing the spirit of the Bush Report, he has stressed that the government-university partnership is not simply about the procurement of research results. It is also about nurturing and maintaining the human strengths of a great technological nation and sowing the seeds that will ultimately bear fruit in new products and processes to fuel our economy and improve our quality of life.

In my view, this leadership role in articulating the case for and defining the nature of the relationship between the federal government and the nation's

research universities has been absolutely critical for the future of our nation. It is also deserving of recognition by awarding Dr. Vest the National Medal of Technology.

Sincerely,