Under Secretary for Science
Washington, DC 20585

November 6, 2008

Dr. Martin J. Greenwald, Chair
Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee
Plasma Science and Fusion Center
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NW17-107
175 Albany Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Dear Dr. Greenwald:

I request that the Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee (FESAC) establish a Committee of Visitors (COV) that can assist FESAC in:

- assessing the efficacy and quality of the processes used by the Office of Fusion Energy Sciences (OFES) to solicit, review, recommend, monitor, and document awards and declinations for universities, national laboratories, and industry.

- assessing the breadth, depth, and quality of the resulting program portfolio, and providing an evaluation of the program's national and international standing.

The last COV activity evaluated portions of the program over a three year period. Starting with this COV, I am asking FESAC to review the entire OFES program at the same time. Therefore, the tokamak research and enabling technologies portion of the program should be evaluated from 2006 to the present, the innovative confinement, general plasma sciences, and the High Energy Density Laboratory Plasmas portions of the program should be evaluated from 2005 to the present, and the theory and computations portion of the program should be evaluated from 2004 to the present. This will make it possible for the next COV to evaluate the entire program for a three year period.

The COV panel should be composed of recognized scientists and research program managers with broad expertise relevant to the fusion program. Panel members should be familiar with OFES research programs; however, a significant fraction of the COV members should not be involved in research that is being funded by OFES. Each panel member will be required to sign a Conflict of Interest statement and a Confidentiality statement. Examples of both statements are enclosed.

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I believe that the COV reviews conducted in this manner will help the Office of Science maintain a high standard of scientific research. A report on the COV activity should be completed by April 2009.

Sincerely,

Raymond L. Orbach

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Enclosures