

# SCIENCE

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# LETTERS

## Objects of study

The planet Earth (at right) is indeed a proper object of study for NASA, says this week's first letter writer, Congressman Robert S. Walker (R-PA). Readers suggest that K–12 science education could be improved by opening teaching careers to Ph.D.'s, by enrolling teachers in university courses, and by better exploiting natural history museums. Conventions that might "clarify the duty of confidentiality" during peer review are offered. Concerns about interpreting clinical AIDS data and developing "live attenuated HIV-1 vaccines" are discussed. And whistleblowers not polled in a survey about whistleblowing might (it is pointed out) have something to say.



## "Earth" Not Omitted Intentionally

The draft Omnibus Space Commercialization Act that was discussed at the 5 March Commercial Space Roundtable contains an inadvertent omission. Section 107 of the draft bill amends section 102(d) of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958. It should read, "The expansion of human knowledge of the Earth and of phenomena in the atmosphere and space."

In staff submissions to the House of Representatives' legislative counsel office, the words "of the Earth" were inadvertently omitted. There was no intention to delete reference to the expansion of human knowledge of the Earth. There was no discussion among the staff or with me about excluding this important goal.

The ScienceScope item "Taking the Earth out of NASA" (15 Mar., p. 1485) indicates that there was some thought involved in leaving those particular words out and that, as a result, there is concern among the scientific community. I am happy to set the record straight.

**Robert S. Walker**

*Chairman, Committee on Science,  
U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC 20515–6301, USA*

## Good Teaching

Richard L. Hinman (Editorial, 15 Dec., p. 1739) prescribes "good programs for teachers," echoing Bruce Alberts' hope that Ph.D. scientists and young people should consider kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) teaching careers (1). He is right.

It is time for real "action" to show that

"good teachers produce good students." The politics and bureaucracy of school districts diffuses the enthusiasm considerably. Let us not add to it. Above all, the obstruction facing Ph.D.'s who lack a "teaching credential" should be removed. Restructuring is necessary to encourage Ph.D.'s to seek K–12 teaching careers.

Training teachers who are already employed is equally vital. They must take real university courses in the subject matter. The Josephine Miles Fellows Program for K–12 teachers was created at the University of California, Berkeley, in support of such an idea. It is imperative that we emphasize content and true excellence in teacher training. Good teachers with depth and breadth of knowledge are the architects of those minds who will shape and continue the progress of humankind.

**Shoumen Datta**

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## References

1. B. Alberts, *J. Natl. Inst. Health Res.* 7, 32 (1995).

Collections-based natural history museums should fall under Hinman's definition of "science museums." While the term "science museum" often refers to a hands-on science technology center, rather than a collections-based natural history museum, natural history museums are in the unique position of being able, in many instances, to integrate their scientific research activities with exhibitions and education programs, the latter including curriculum guides to dioramas for K–12 teachers and their classes; in-service