The American People's Research

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Walton Family Foundation

Trump attacks on R&D are a complete departure from 8 decades of bipartisan support

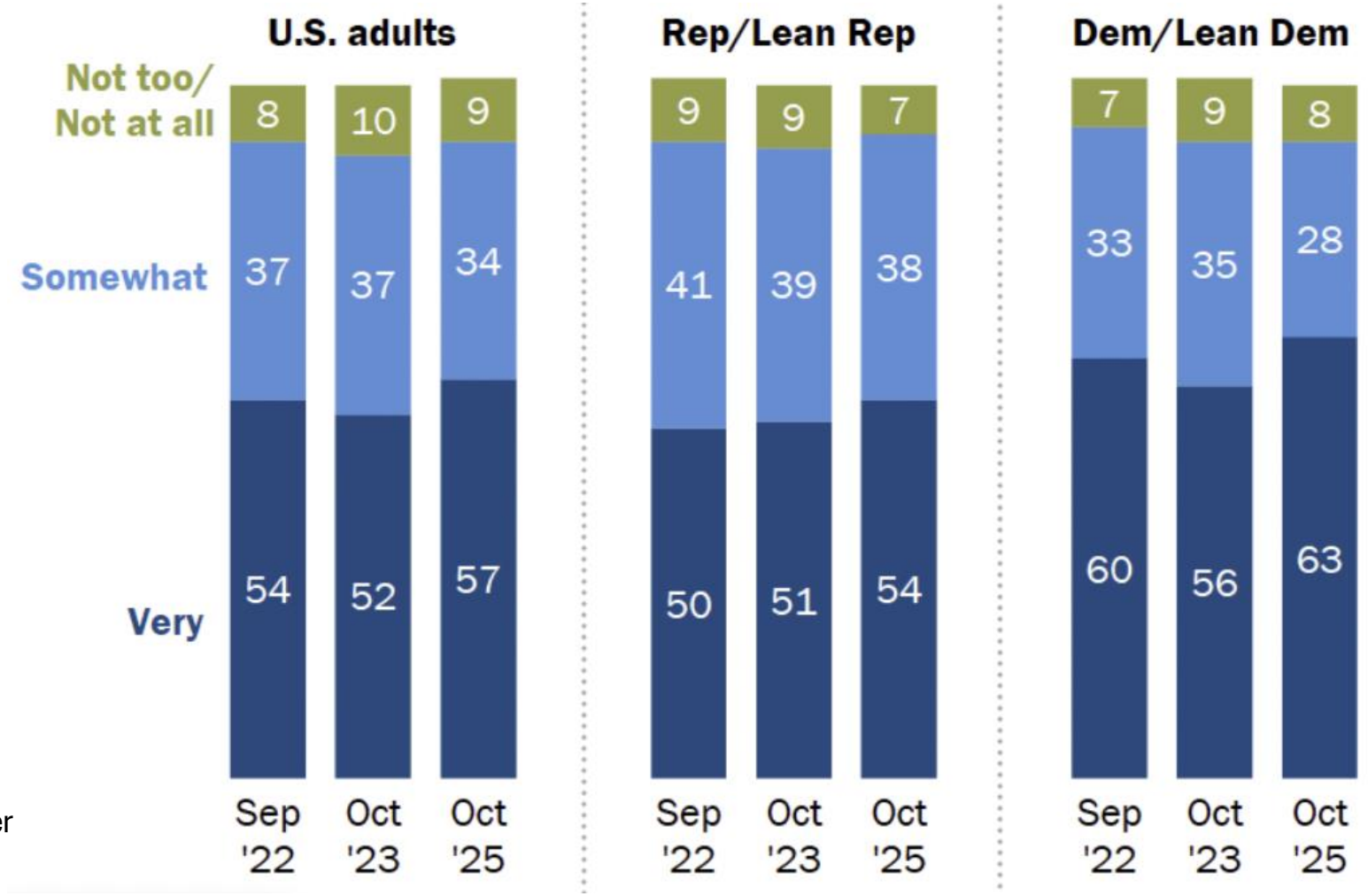
This administration has:

- Cancelled contracted projects & imposed ideology-driven bans
- Attacked universities
- Limited high-talent immigration
- Removed thousands of agency staff
- Ignored evidence and facts to make policies that damage safety and health
- Proposed the largest funding cuts in history

As a result —
Americans will be less secure and safe,
will lead sicker and shorter lives,
and will have fewer opportunities

Animosity to R&D comes from Trump, not his voters

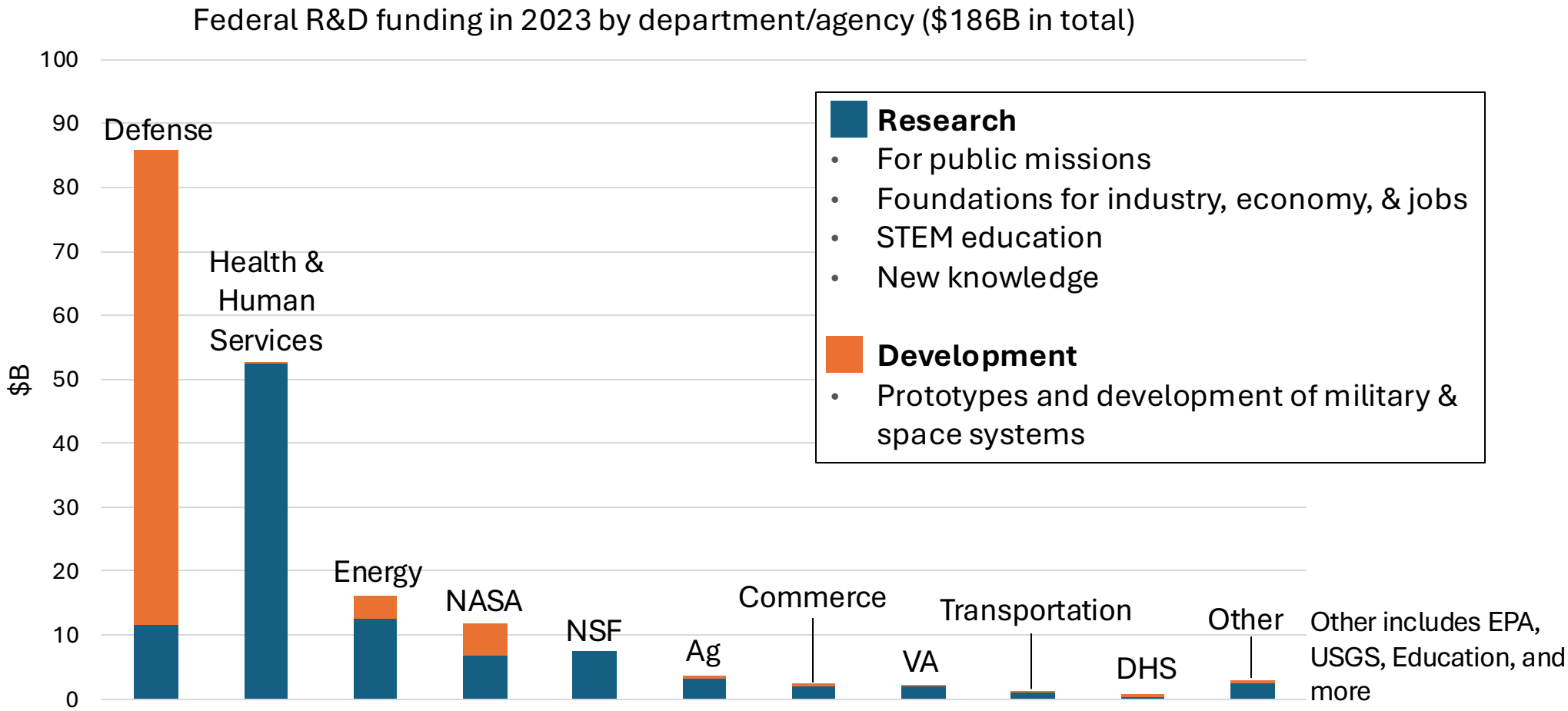
% who say that, thinking about all the important goals for the United States, **it is ___ important for the U.S. to be a world leader in scientific achievements**



Pew Research Center
January 2026

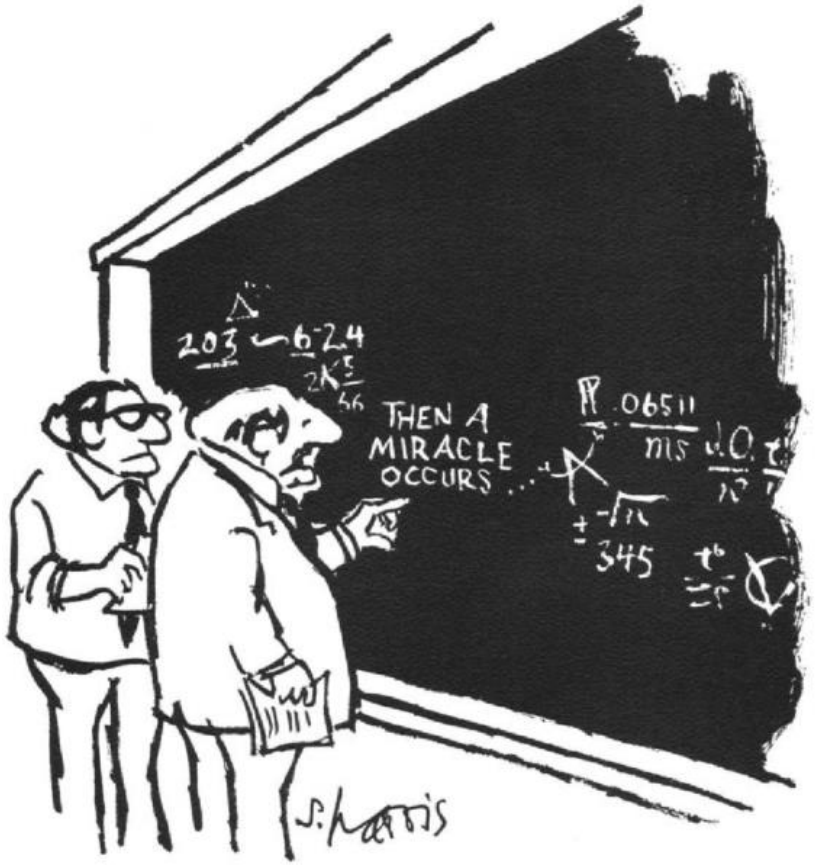
https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2026/01/15/do-americans-think-the-country-is-losing-or-gaining-ground-in-science/

Federally funded R&D has served – and must serve – many different public purposes



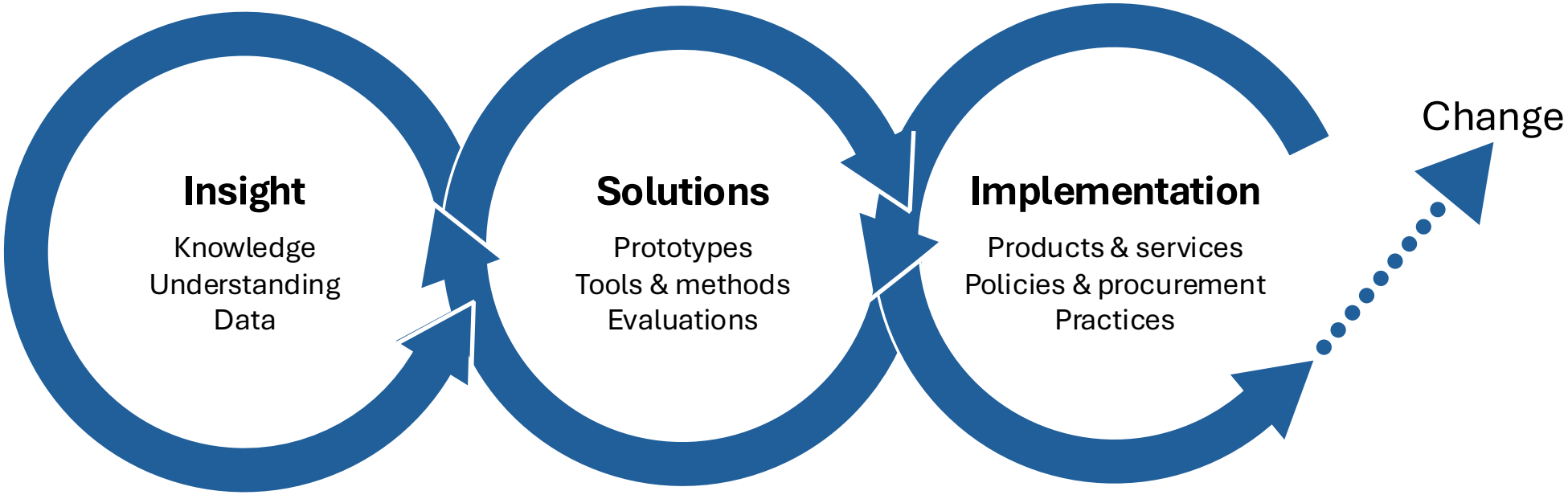
2023 data, Science and Engineering Indicators

A common story is that scientific research automatically creates progress

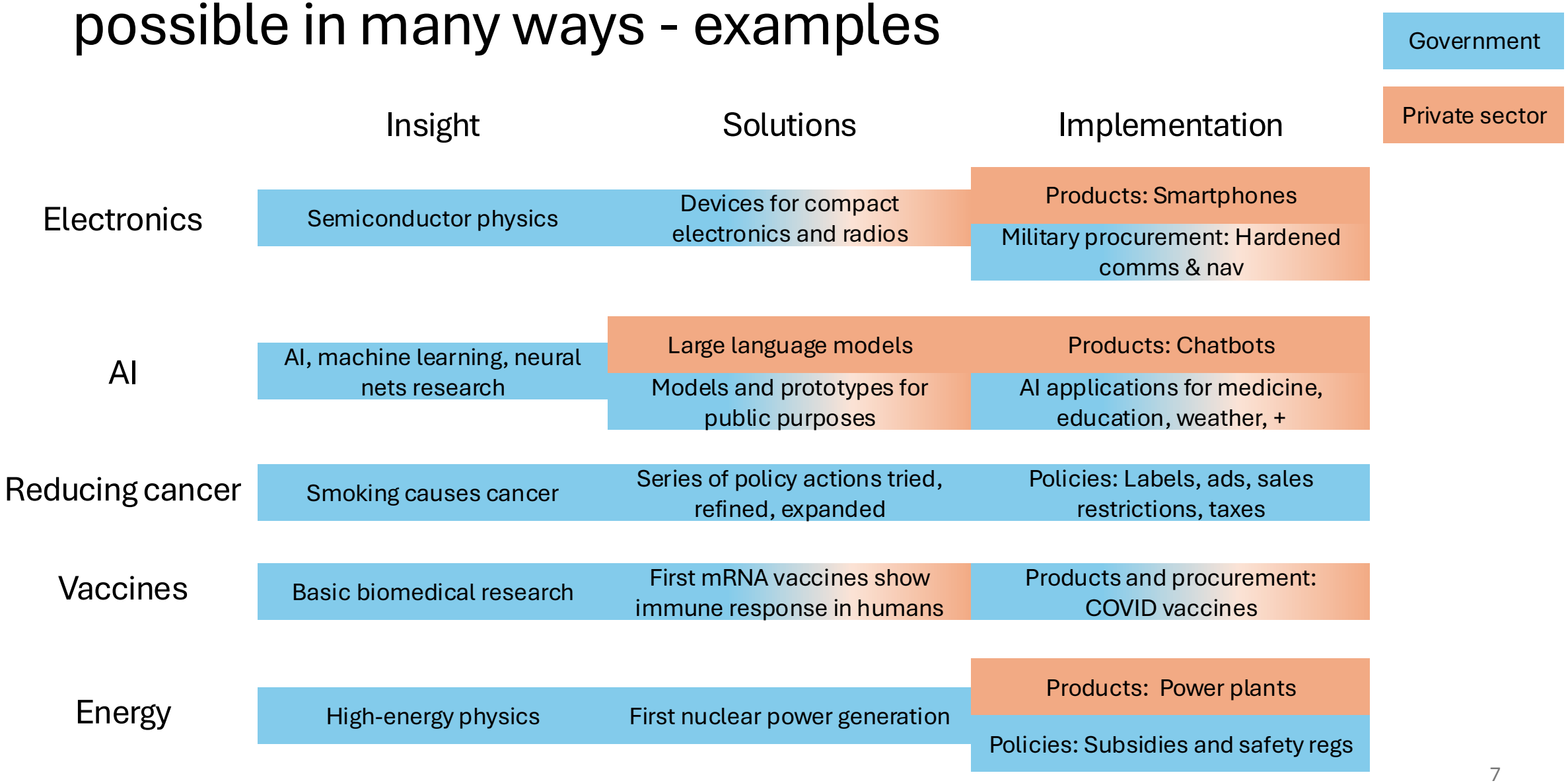


"I THINK YOU SHOULD BE MORE EXPLICIT HERE IN STEP TWO."

It takes a richly complex system to turn research into progress



Research makes many kinds of major advances possible in many ways - examples



We face a paradox:
The best-ever capacity for science and technology…

- Birthed whole industries: semiconductors, computing, communications, internet, AI; aerospace; pharma, biotech; clean energy
- Unlocked preventing and curing diseases
- Enabled deterrence of potential adversaries
- Understood environmental and safety risks
- Showed what to do about the climate crisis
- Explored the deepest ocean and captured photons from the Cosmic Dawn

“The acceptance of risk and seemingly crazy leaps of inspiration woven into American attitudes help produce a research environment that nowhere else can quite match.”

Quote from “World Scientists Look Elsewhere as U.S. Labs Stagger Under Trump Cuts,” New York Times, June 3, 2025

… is inadequate for our times

- Research funding is often incremental and spread too thin
- U.S. health outcomes are unacceptable
- Economic opportunity is unavailable to many people and regions
- The world is not meeting the climate crisis
- U.S. is not managing AI downsides or pursuing upsides for public purposes
- Funding does not focus on areas like education, training, and population health where research can now offer progress

To address the immediate crisis:

- Contain damage to people, projects, data, and policymaking
- Make the danger plain to Congress and the public to protect budgets
- Speak out against destructive actions

But don’t confuse the immediate crisis with a policy discussion: Administration actions are not addressing the challenges – only destroying

To recommit and build public R&D for our future:

- Recognize the scale of the challenge
  - Not just patching cracks but a Marshall Plan
- Start with missions, not mechanisms
  - First: understand and recommit to meeting America's aspirations for security, health, & prosperity – for our times
  - Then: restore/strengthen/change/initiate agencies and mechanisms
- Strengthen public ownership
  - Engage and listen to broad publics to inform strategic goals
- Prepare for rapid action at scale
  - Legislative proposals and executive actions
  - Future civil servants and political appointees ready to serve the nation
  - Active and ongoing engagement with broad publics

When we again have
consistent, committed, and bipartisan publicly funded R&D,
researchers can again do the work that opens the door to the future

Thank you

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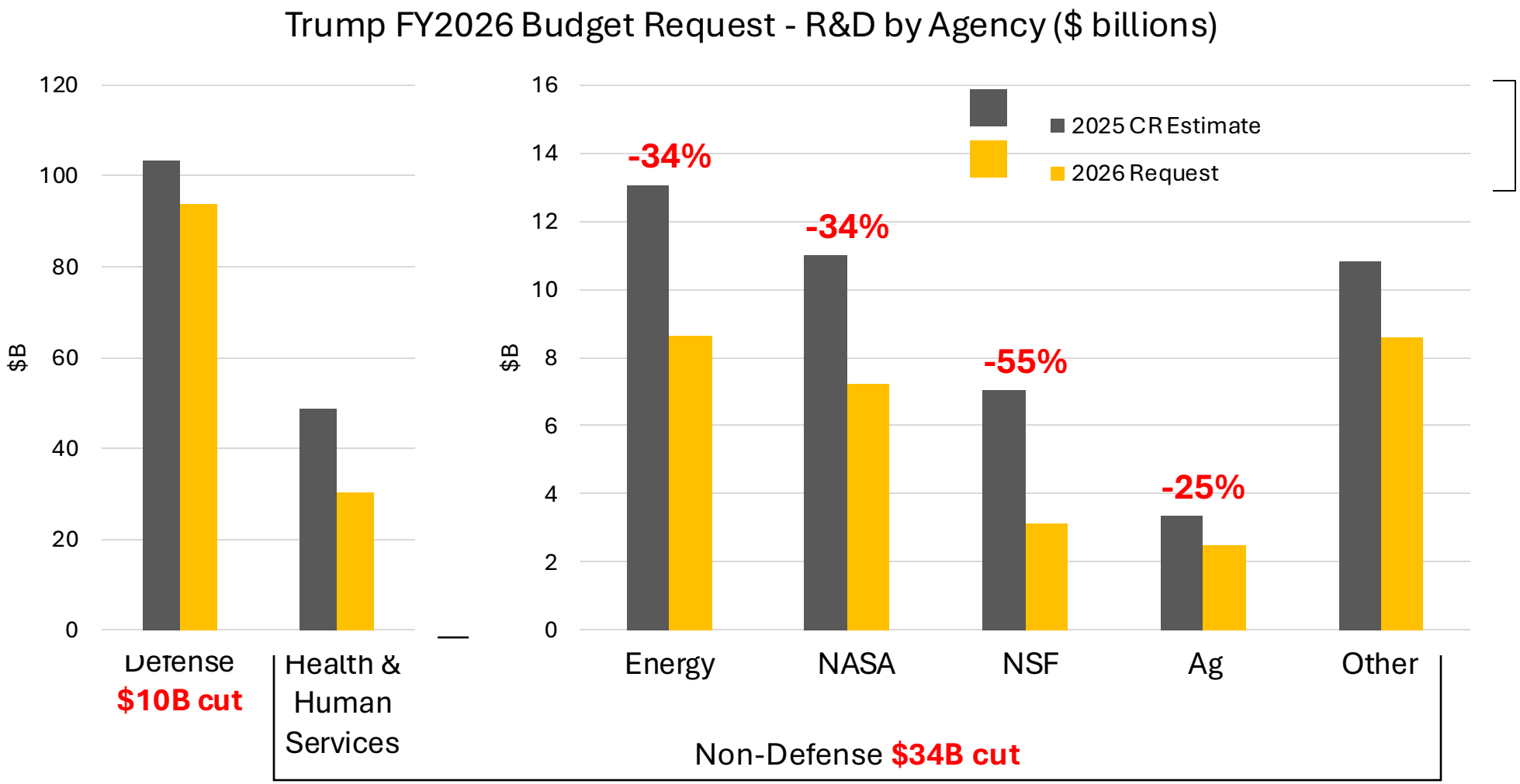
Additional materials

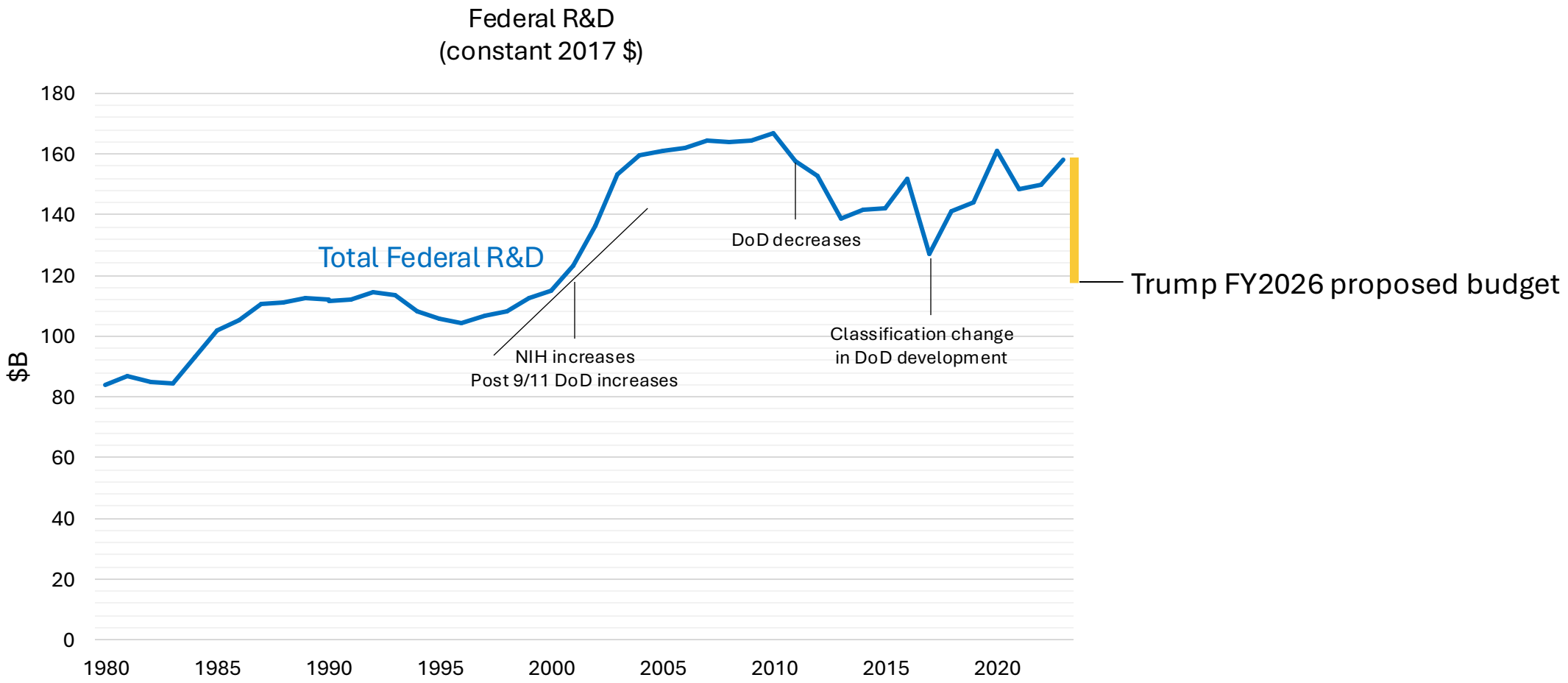
Trump budget proposal

The Trump FY2026 proposal cut R&D by $44B; Congress did not go along



AAAS FY 2026 R&D Appropriations, Federal R&D Estimates

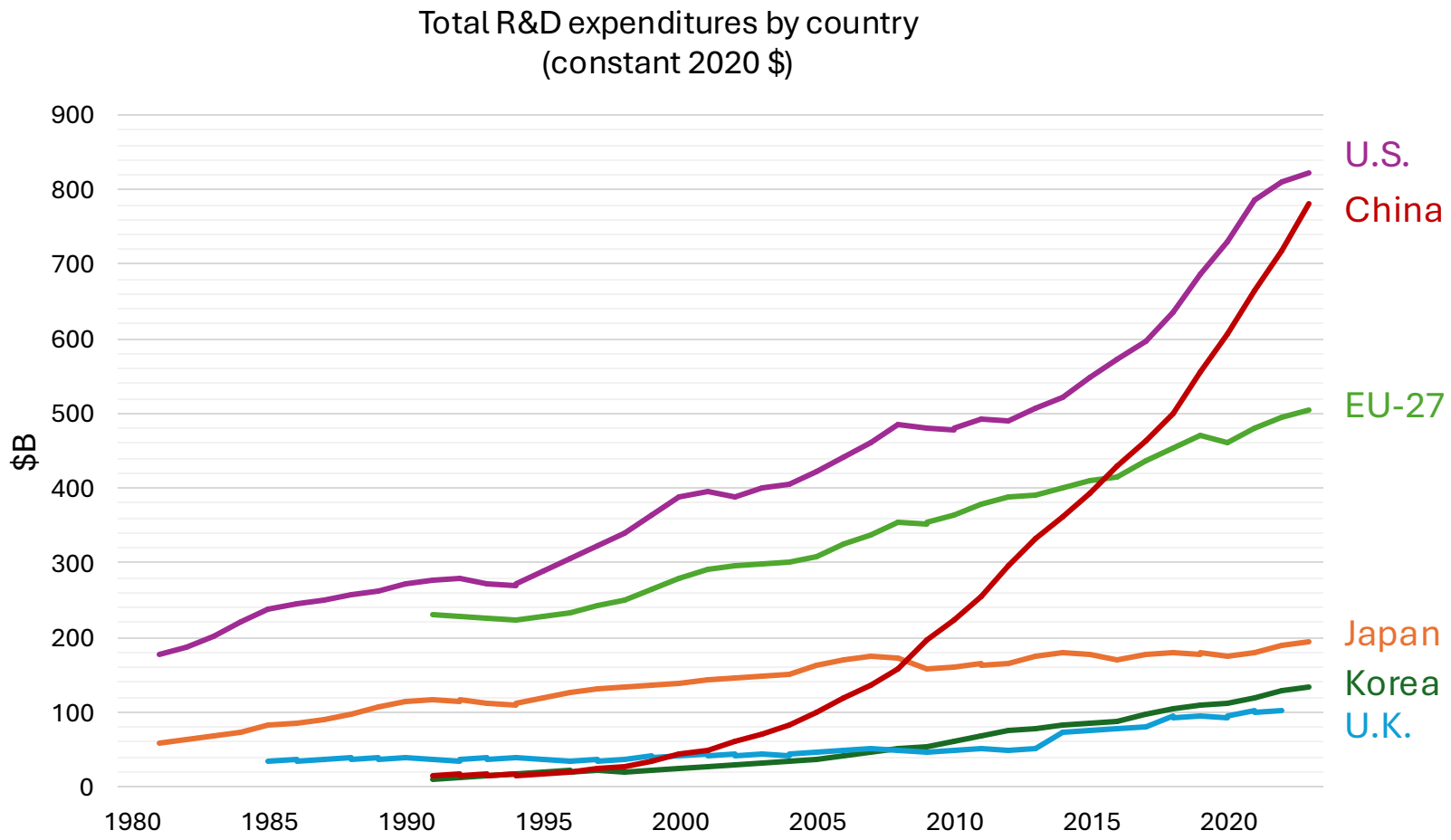
The $44B cut would have been the biggest single-year reduction ever, locking in damage from initial actions



2022 data, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

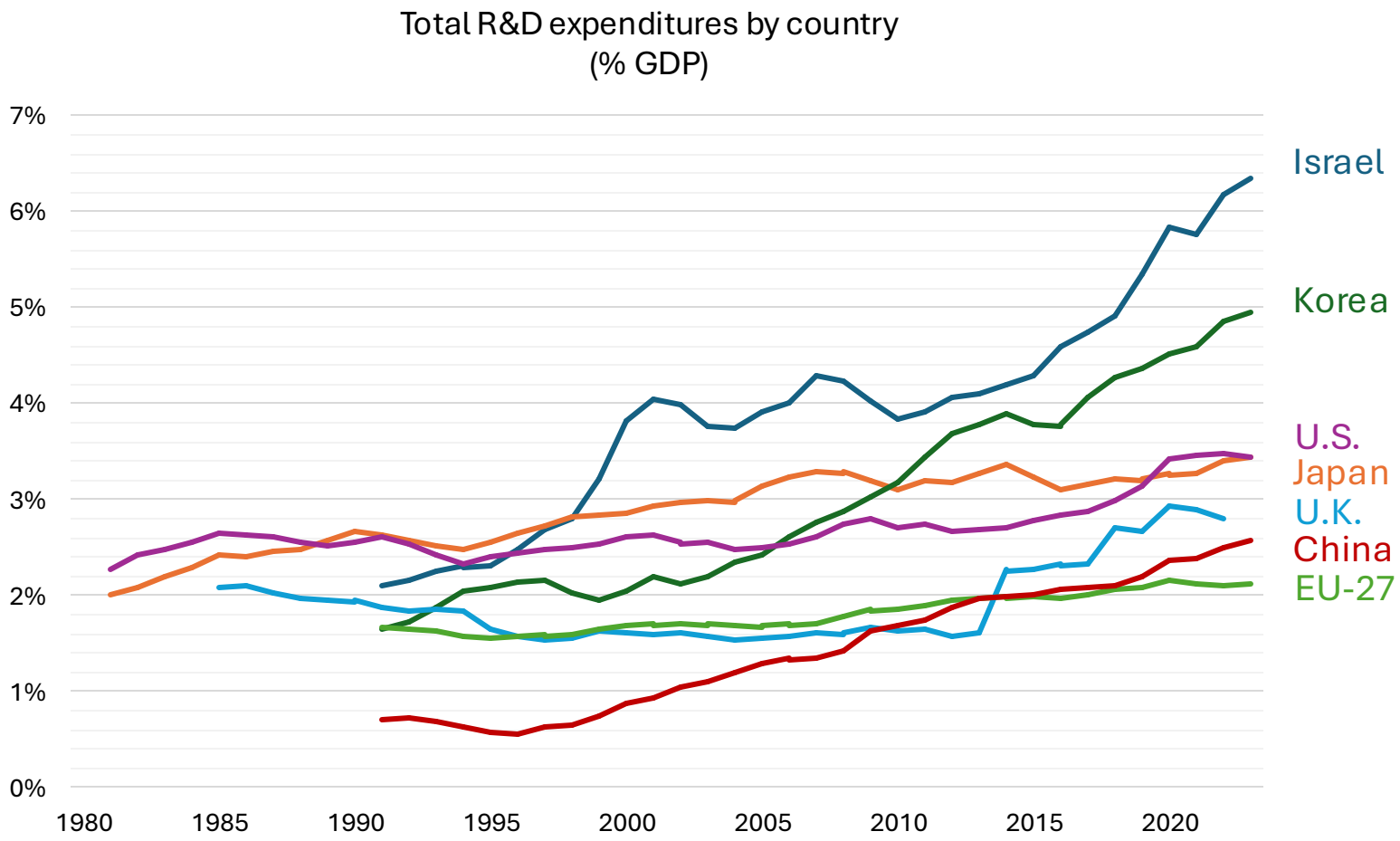
The global view:
National comparisons of R&D spending

China's R&D growth is unprecedented; U.S. R&D is still strong



2023 data, OECD Main Science and Technology Indicators (MSTI) Database

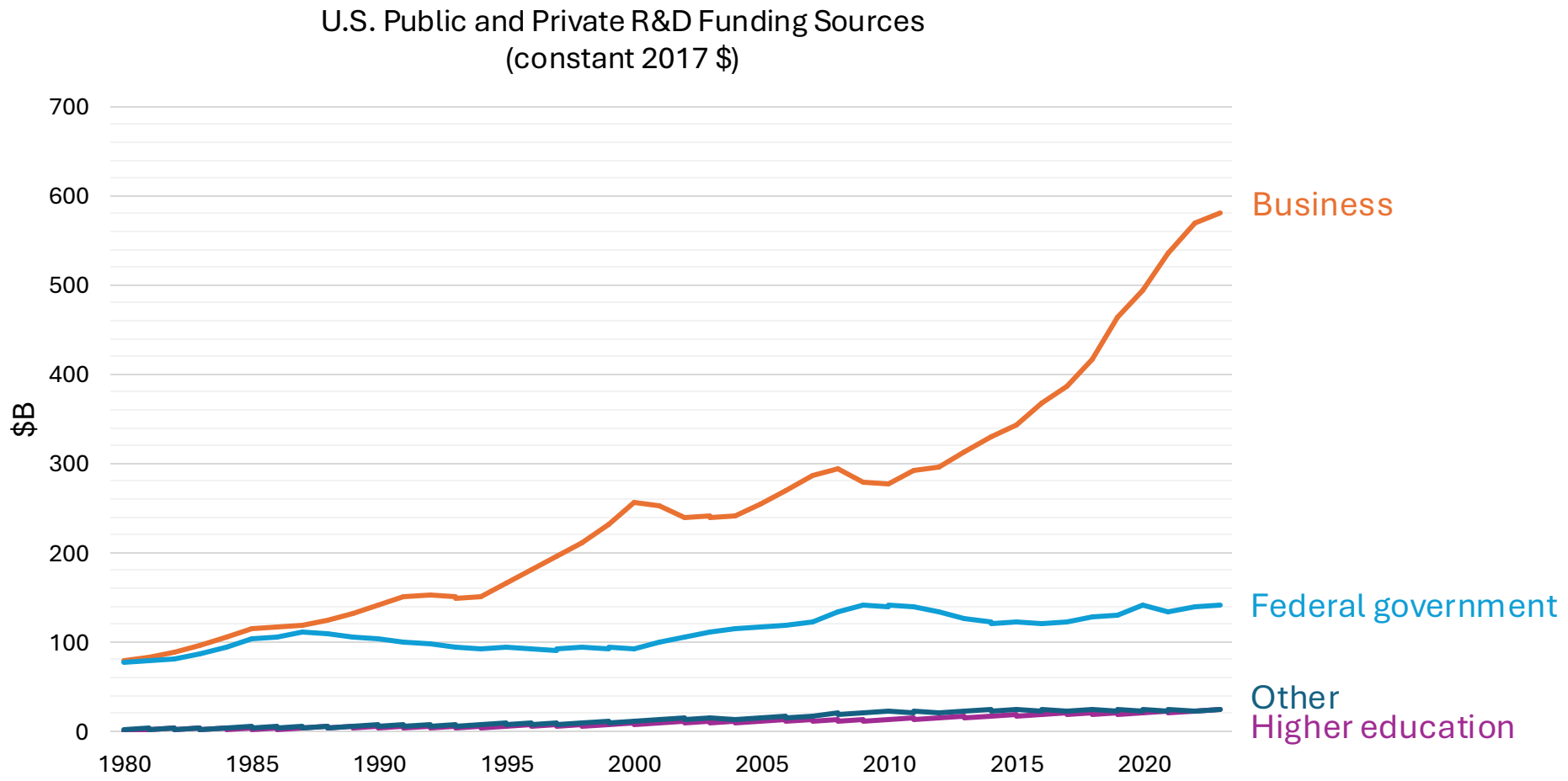
The U.S. spends over 3% of GDP on R&D



2023 data, OECD Main Science and Technology Indicators (MSTI) Database

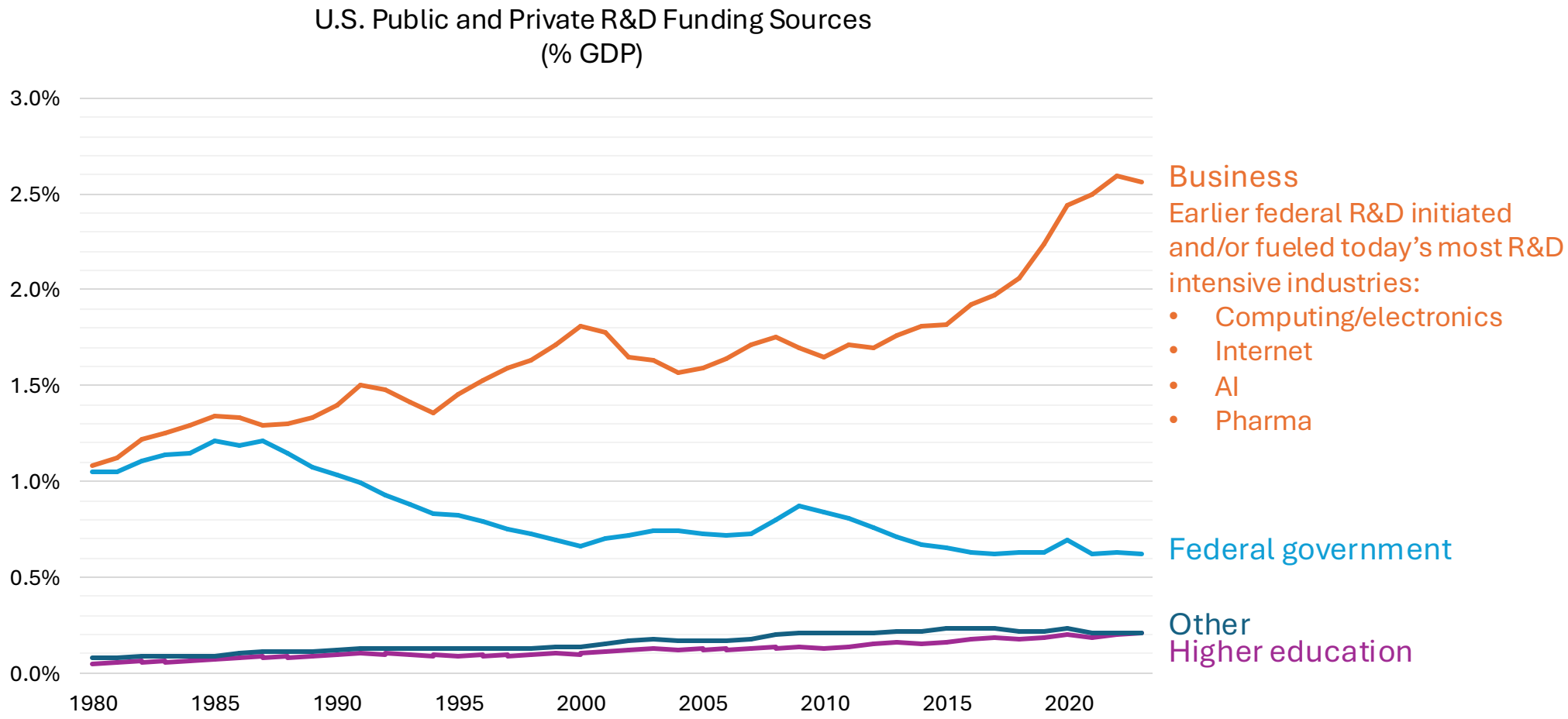
The national view:
U.S. private & public sector R&D

Corporate R&D grew 7X in 4 decades—for product development, not public purposes



2023 data, Science and Engineering Indicators

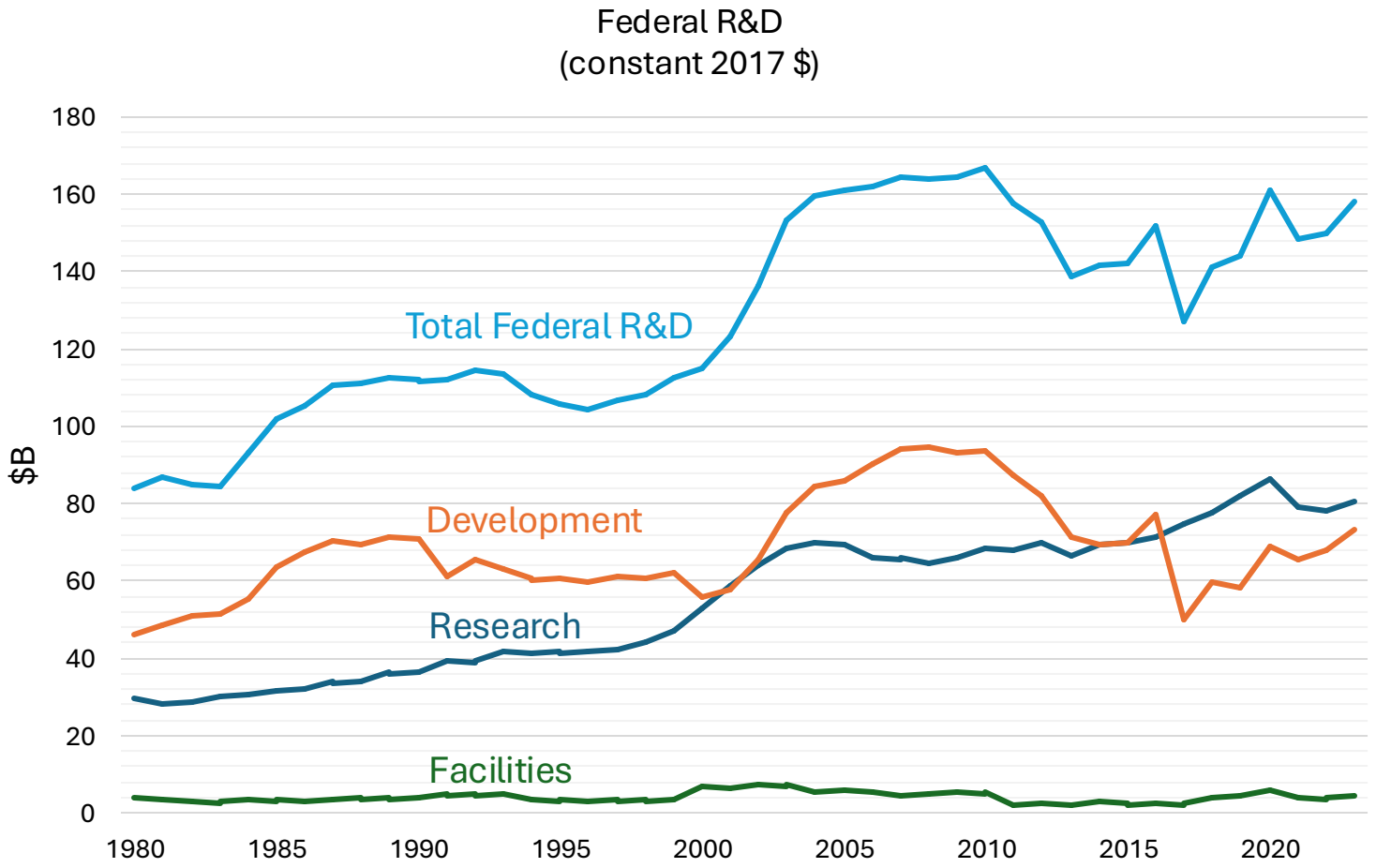
Corporate R&D far outstripped GDP growth, driven by industries born from federal R&D



2023 data, Science and Engineering Indicators

The public sector view:
Federally funded R&D

Federal research and federal development have different drivers



Research: Basic & applied research for a wide range of public purposes

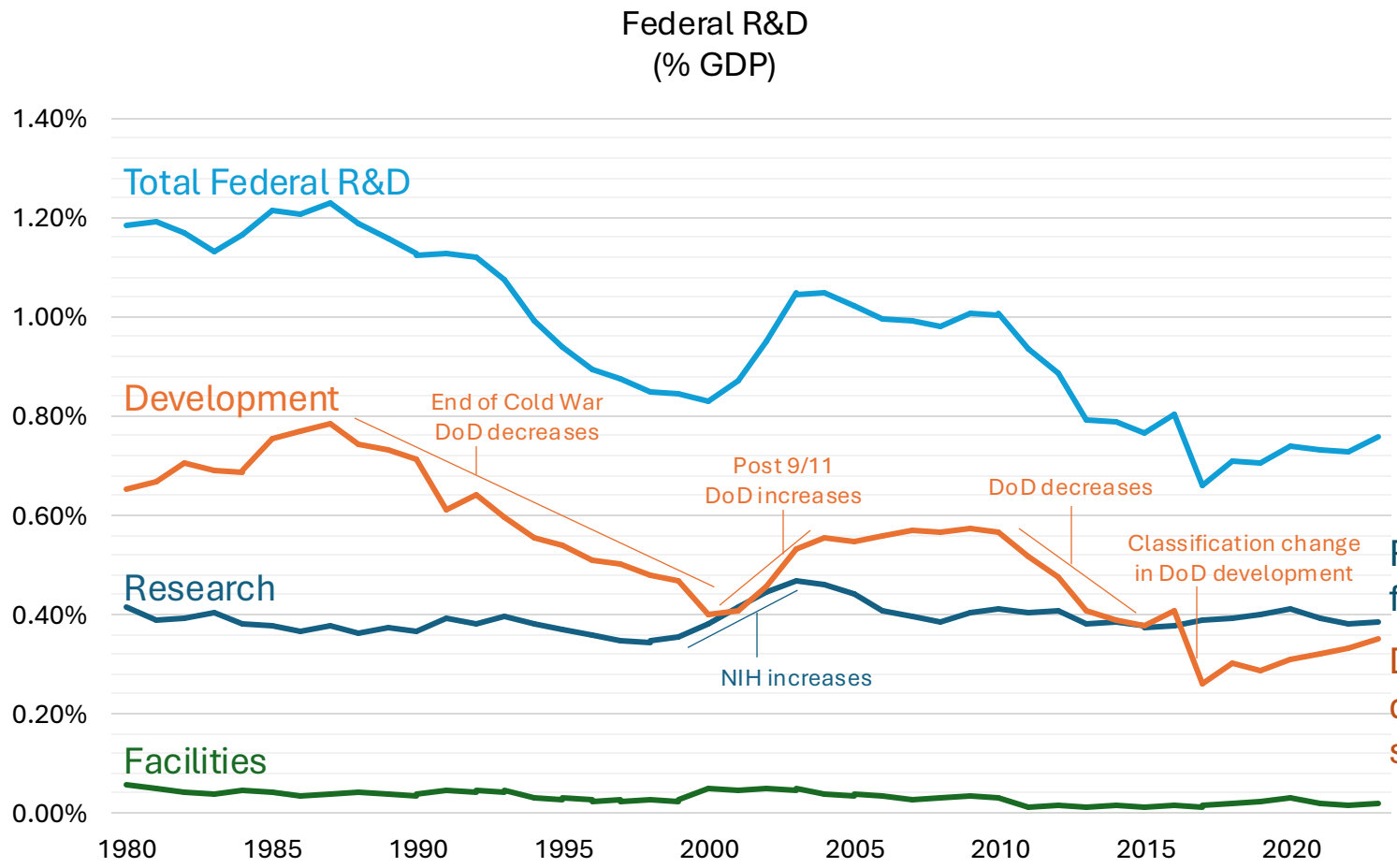
Development: Prototypes and development of major military & space systems

2017 reflects a classification change

2022 data, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

Note: Because agencies report "basic" and applied" research in different ways, this and subsequent charts do not break out these subcategories of Research.

The declining share of GDP for federal R&D is driven by shifts in federal development, not research



Research: Basic & applied research for a wide range of public purposes

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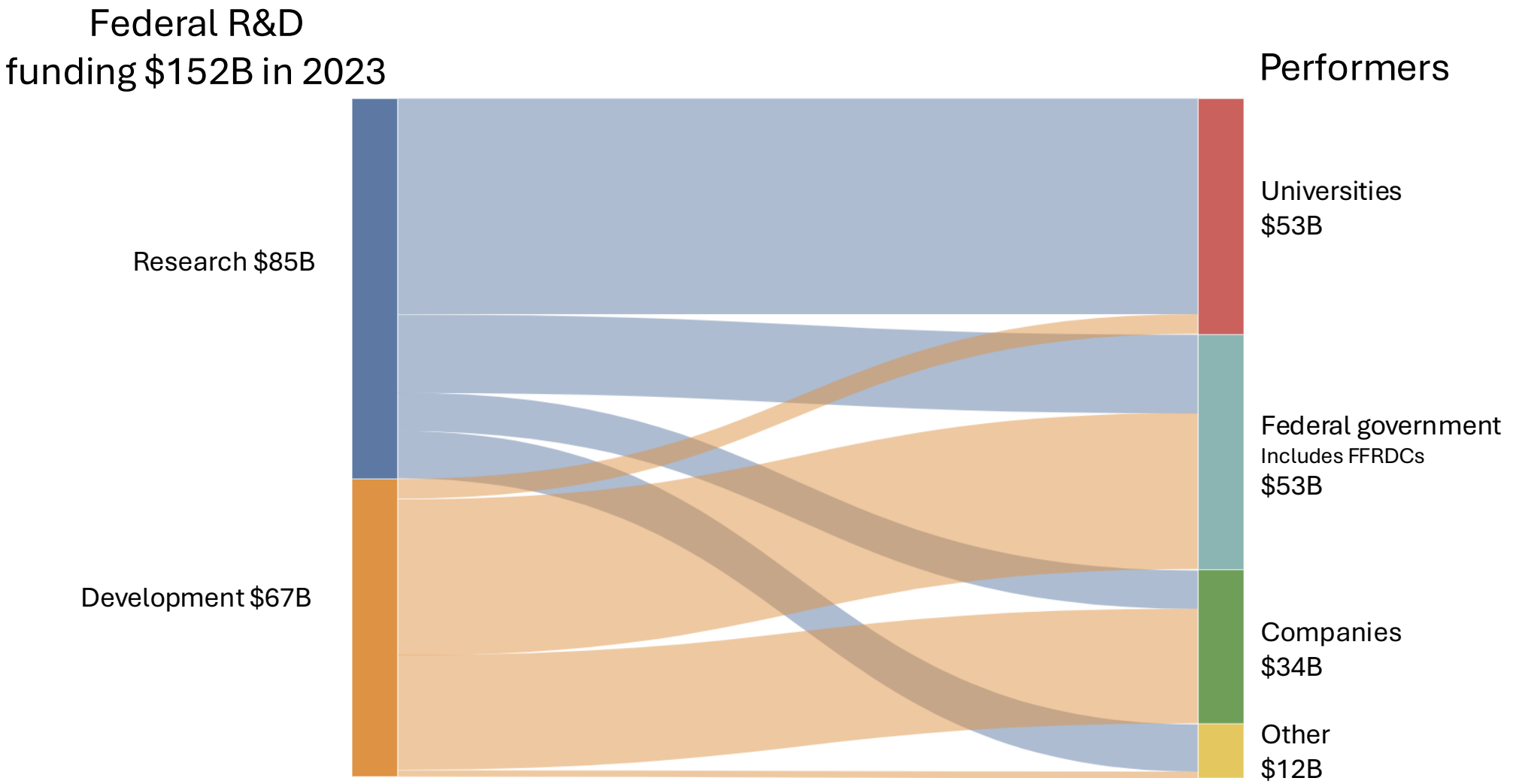
2022 data, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)

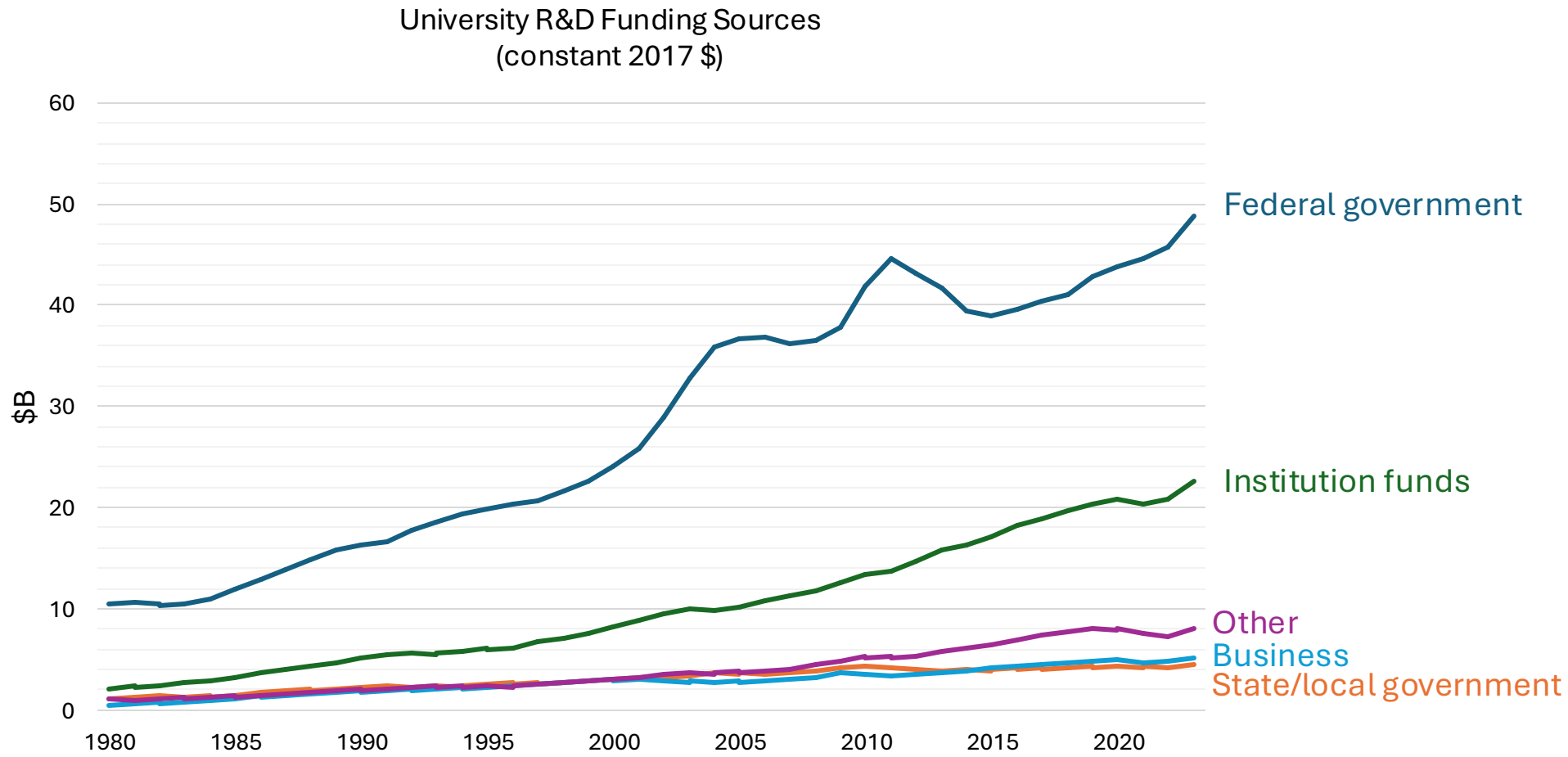
The university view:
University research funding sources

Universities play an essential role



2023 data, Science and Engineering Indicators

University research is still highly dependent on federal funding



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