



IN THIS ISSUE – April 15, 2005: <http://www.faseb.org/opa/washington/>

- [Budget Update](#)
- [Inside \(the Beltway\) Scoop](#)
- [FASEB Meetings on the Hill](#)
- [Additional FASEB Activities](#)
- [Bills, Bills, Bills](#)
- [Congressional Hearings](#)

## BUDGET UPDATE

### *FY2006 Budget Resolution*

House and Senate budget negotiators are in the process of meeting to discuss the FY 2006 budget resolution. Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH) commented that while talks are in full swing it was unrealistic to expect a budget deal by the April 15 statutory deadline. While the Senate has appointed conferees, the House may not do so until next week. The challenge for the conferees will be to resolve a number of key differences including the total amount of funding available for discretionary spending, the size of the tax cuts and the amount specified in Medicaid savings and other mandatory programs such as aid for farmers.

Five key Senate Republicans wrote to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Budget Committees this week, urging them to keep the extra \$5.4 billion for discretionary spending that the Senate included in its bill. You may recall that the upper chamber adopted an amendment sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to increase education spending by \$5.4 billion. If the conferees agree to include the extra \$5.4 billion for discretionary spending, appropriators would have the flexibility to parcel out the funds as they see fit and would not be bound to spend it on education programs.

[Back to top](#)

## INSIDE (the Beltway) SCOOP – Jon Retzlaff, Legislative Director

On April 6, 2005, the Senate L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee held its annual hearing to review the President's FY2006 budget request for NIH. While both Senate L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Ranking Member Tom Harkin (D-IA) strongly criticized the President's proposal to provide NIH with a .7 percent increase, they acknowledged that they are facing an uphill battle to provide additional

money for the agency. Senator Specter stated that many of his colleagues believe NIH received “too much money, too soon,” and asked Dr. Zerhouni to make a strong effort to show how the money is being put to good use. Senator Harkin remarked that, “We did not double the budget to have the bones cut out.”

It appears that NIH is in for a very difficult year, maybe even more challenging than we had originally forecasted. Full Appropriations Chairman Thad Cochran’s (R-MS) comments and questions at the hearing did not provide us with much hope that Senator Specter’s subcommittee will be provided with the kind of allocation necessary to substantially increase the NIH budget much above the President’s request. In fact, it may be a challenge for the subcommittee to provide the amount proposed by the President. However, the silver lining is that Senators’ Specter and Harkin will do everything in their power to support biomedical research and if anyone will be able to find the money, it is these two men and their staff.

[Back to top](#)

## FASEB MEETINGS ON THE HILL

### *FASEB President Meets with former House Speaker, Newt Gingrich*

On March 18, 2005, Paul Kincade, FASEB’s President, Howard Garrison, FASEB’s Director of Public Affairs, and Jon Retzlaff, FASEB’s Director of Legislative Relations, met with former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Vince Haley, Policy Director for Mr. Gingrich. FASEB’s Office of Public Affairs initiated the meeting to thank the Speaker for his interest in and for his support of science. Mr. Gingrich’s states the following in his most recent book:

*“The research budget of the United States should be considered part of the national security budget. Investing in science (including math and science education) is the most important strategic investment we make in continued American leadership economically and militarily. Investing in science has also been the most consistent, powerful, single mechanism for extending life and for improving the quality of life. When developing the federal budget, the investment in science should be considered immediately after operational military requirements and before any of the traditional domestic spending programs.*



*In the next few years the requirements are pretty straight forward.*

*The National Institutes of Health (NIH) should increase at a rate that allows it to sustain its current research program. Having recently doubled the*

***Former Speaker Newt Gingrich and Dr. Paul Kincade***

*NIH budget, Congress does not need to double it again immediately. Congress should be aware, however, of the crippling impact of a flat budget when research opportunities and needs are growing.*

*The National Science Foundation's (NSF) budget should be tripled over the next five years. The Foundation is the engine of basic research for the United States, and most of our modern medical advances have come as the result of basic research initially funded by the NSF."*

Speaker Gingrich said that the Administration's FY2006 budget for the numerous science agencies is shortsighted. He believes that we are in the midst of the greatest explosion of scientific knowledge in our history and now is the time to ramp up our efforts, not step back from them. Mr. Gingrich commented that he is more concerned about science than at any other time. In addition, he commented that Congress must propose programs to provide incentives to encourage young people to go into science. Speaker Gingrich offered to assist us in any way that we believe would be appropriate.

[Back to top](#)

## **ADDITIONAL FASEB ACTIVITIES**

### **FASEB Works With Congressional Supporters on Visa Issues**

FASEB has joined other scientific and higher education organizations in signing a letter in support of S. 455, the American Competitiveness Through International Openness Now (ACTION) Act, which addresses some of the remaining concerns regarding visa policies for international students and scholars. "Our nation's colleges and universities and scientific and technical organizations are the engines of new knowledge, discoveries, technologies, and training that power the country's research enterprise and contribute greatly to economic and national security," reads the letter, addressed to the bill's cosponsors, Senators Coleman (R-MN) and Bingaman (D-NM). In supporting the specifics of the bill, the organizations suggest that of particular importance are "the provisions that would encourage the State Department to renegotiate visa reciprocity agreements with other countries and that would amend the Immigration and Naturalization Act to require consular officers to make visa issuance decisions based on whether a student visa applicant has sufficient financial means and a legitimate academic intent to complete a bona fide course of study in the United States." The full text of the letter is available [here](#), and the text of the bill can be found by searching for S.455 [here](#).

[Back to top](#)

# BILLS, BILLS, BILLS

## **Bill # not yet assigned for "The Math and Science Incentive Act of 2005."**

On April 13, 2005, Congressmen Frank Wolf (R-VA), Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) and Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) held a press conference to introduce the Math and Science Incentive Act of 2005. Mr. Wolf said that their legislation would pay - over the life of the loan up to \$10,000 - the interest on the undergraduate student loans of math, science or engineering majors who agree to work five years in their respective fields. Mr. Wolf said that the idea for this legislation came from Newt Gingrich's book, "Winning the Future."

[Back to top](#)

## HEARINGS

### **Senate L/HHS Appropriations Subc. Hearing on NIH's FY 2006 Budget**

On April 6, 2005, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education (Senator Arlen Specter [R-PA], Chairman) held a hearing on the Fiscal Year 2006 NIH budget. Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director, NIH, provided the NIH Overview and was accompanied by the Directors of the NCI, NIAID, and NIDDK.

In addition to criticizing the President's funding proposal for NIH, Senator Specter expressed concern about NIH's conflict of interest regulations and remarked that revisions may be necessary. He also voiced concern that stem cell researchers are relocating to California, Massachusetts and other States as well as to Europe. He observed that a strong sentiment exists in Congress to broaden the availability of stem cells and suggested that Dr. Zerhouni look for advocates within the Administration. Senator Specter said that he is aware that President Bush is firm in his beliefs, but stated that so is he as are many of his colleagues.

Senator Harkin also expressed concern about the conflict of interest regulations and stated that the rules go too far especially the one's that require employees to divest. He implored Dr. Zerhouni to change the regulations concerning stock divestiture. He cited the impact on employees and their families. He said that the rules are, "too onerous and they must be re-done before you lose more people."

In addition, Senator Harkin remarked that NIH is supposed to be the greatest biomedical research institution in the world, but he is beginning to wonder how it will maintain this position if scientists are not allowed to participate in stem cell research.

### **Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subc. Hearing on NIH's FY 2006 Budget**

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies held an April 13<sup>th</sup> hearing on the FY 2006 budget for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dr. Joseph Jen, Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics

testified on behalf of USDA's research and training programs, although the majority of the hearing focused on agricultural economic issues. The statement issued for the record by the USDA was strongly in favor of the President's plan to move more money into competitive research, "Peer-reviewed competitive programs... are a much more effective use of taxpayer dollars than earmarks..." read the testimony, which also supported elimination of the indirect cost cap on USDA competitive awards. However, Senator Bennett (R-UT), Chair of the Subcommittee, made it clear that Congress was not happy with the elimination of earmarks in the President's budget, a point reinforced by the only other member present, Senator Kohl (D-WI). "You won't be surprised if we put the earmarks back in?" Senator Bennett remarked to Dr. Jen.

[Back to top](#)

*FASEB's Washington Update* is brought to you bi-monthly by the FASEB Office of Public Affairs. We welcome your questions and comments – please contact Gary Kline, Legislative Analyst at [gkline@faseb.org](mailto:gkline@faseb.org) or (202) 543-1155. For more information about how to get involved in research advocacy, visit: <http://capwiz.com/faseb/home/>