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## APPROPRIATIONS UPDATE

### HOUSE

#### **House of Representatives- NIH FY2006 Budget (Full Committee Action)**

On June 16, 2005, the House Appropriations Committee approved the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (L/HHS) FY2006 funding bill by voice vote. The full committee adopted the funding recommendations proposed by the L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee on June 9, 2005, including \$28.507 billion for NIH, an increase of \$142.3 million (0.5% increase). Chairman Ralph Regula (D-OH) acknowledged that he had to make difficult choices, particularly because the subcommittee was forced to use \$900 million of its allocation to fund administrative expenses associated with implementing the Medicare prescription drug law. That left the total they had to distribute to popular education and health programs well under the previous year's levels. Chairman Obey voiced concern with the small increase proposed for NIH, stating that "over time, the reason we have had the best economy in the world is because of our critical investments in science."

Representative Dave Weldon (R-FL) introduced an amendment to restrict research using somatic cell nuclear-transfer technology, or "therapeutic cloning." Universities are moving to explore this technology using nonfederal funds. Representative Weldon's amendment would have denied all NIH funds to any state or academic entity involved in such work. On a 36–29 vote, the Appropriations committee defeated Weldon's amendment. Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) worried that his home state could be affected and warned the panel against plunging into an area outside its budget expertise. He said the issue deserves an in-depth discussion in the appropriate policy arena.

#### **House of Representatives- NIH FY2006 Budget (Floor Action)**

On June 24, 2005, the House passed H.R. 3010, the FY2006 L/HHS Appropriations Bill, by a vote of 250–151. During debate on the bill, House Appropriations Chairman, Jerry Lewis (R-CA) commented that he has been

“very impressed with those at the NIH.” Ranking Member David Obey (D-WI) said that there is not a politician in the House who doesn’t go home and tell his/her constituents what they are doing in specific areas of health research, such as cancer or Alzheimer’s research. Therefore, he said that he failed to understand how Members of Congress could vote for a bill that would result in funding 505 fewer research grants in FY2006 than the agency funded in FY2004.

Representative Randy Neugebauer (R-TX) proposed an amendment to the L/HHS bill that would eliminate funding for two specific research grants supported by the National Institute of Mental Health at the National Institutes of Health. Representative Neugebauer’s amendment would not cut any funding to NIMH; however, it would prevent the Institute from funding these peer-reviewed grants and free up any funds that otherwise go to these grants for other mental health grants. One of the targeted grants, at the University of Iowa, uses an animal model to understand how the brain processes information. The other grant, at the State University of New York at Buffalo, investigates the factors that contribute to successful marriage and how personal feelings of self-esteem influence the capacity to sustain satisfying close relationships. FASEB’s Office of Public Affairs prepared an [alert](#) to urge Congress to oppose this amendment.

Dr. Elias Zerhouni, NIH Director, released the following statement in response to the effort to defund the NIMH grants: "Defunding meritorious grants on the floor of Congress is unjustified scientific censorship. It undermines the historical strength of American science which is based on our world renowned, apolitical, and transparent peer review process."

Unfortunately, in an effort to save time, Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey urged the House to accept a group of amendments, including the Neugebauer amendment, by voice vote. Congressmen Regula and Obey are confident that the amendment will be dropped in conference with the Senate.

#### **House of Representatives-NSF FY2006 Budget (Floor Action)**

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, the House of Representatives voted in favor of the FY2006 Science, State, Justice Appropriations Bill. Included in this legislation was \$5.64 billion for NSF. This funding level increased NSF funding by \$171 million over last year and \$38 million above the President’s budget request.

## **SENATE**

#### **U.S. Senate – NSF FY2006 Budget (Subcommittee Action)**

On June 22, 2005, the Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee marked up its FY 2006 spending bill. Included in this legislation was a budget for the NSF of \$5.5 billion. This funding level was \$58.1 million above the FY 2005 funding level but \$105 million below the President’s request. FASEB President Paul Kincade, PhD,

issued a [press release](#) expressing FASEB's concerns about the Senate action.

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



Former Labor-HHS Chair John Porter addresses FASEB Board before Congressional meetings.



**FASEB's Office of Public Affairs hosted and facilitated a "Capitol Hill Day" on Monday, June, 13, 2005, to coincide with the FASEB Board Meeting. The event was an outstanding success largely due to the participation and enthusiasm of 16 FASEB Board Members. The Board Members met in groups of two or three with senior staffers from 18 Congressional offices (16 on the Senate side and 2 on the House side). The meetings were an opportunity for the Board Members to discuss the importance of federal funding for scientific research, provide information about their individual scientific work, share their personal experience of what it is like to be an extramural researcher (the competitiveness aspect, etc.), and make the staffer aware of the various resources FASEB has available.**

The Honorable John Edward Porter, former Chairman of the House L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, spoke to the group beforehand and provided the Board Members with helpful information for their meetings. Many of the staffers e-mailed me afterwards and said that they learned a lot and appreciated the opportunity to meet with such distinguished scientists! Thanks to everyone who participated. FASEB's Office of Public Affairs will continue to seek out these kinds of opportunities to provide outreach to Congressional Members and staff.

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## **ADDITIONAL FASEB ACTIVITIES**

### **FASEB meets with staff to Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham**

On June 23, 2005, Gary Kline, FASEB Legislative Analyst, Peter Farnham, Public Affairs Officer for the American Society For Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB), Jim Marion, ASBMB Government Relations Intern and Dr. Rebecca Osthus, Science Policy Analyst for the American Physiological Society, met with Dustin Steiner, Appropriation's Associate for Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-CA). Mr. Cunningham sits on the Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee that funds NIH. This meeting was set up in anticipation of action on the FY 2006 Labor-HHS spending bill which was being debated on the House floor during our meeting.

During the meeting, the group expressed its appreciation for Congressman Cunningham's past support of medical research and stem cell science.

Mr. Kline indicated that FASEB and its member societies are concerned with the level of funding for NIH in this year's budget and provided Mr. Steiner with a copy of the FASEB FY 2006 Federal Funding Report. The group also indicated to Mr. Steiner that they were concerned with proposed amendments likely to be offered by Congressman Randy Neugebauer (R-TX) that would defund specific NIH grants.

Mr. Steiner indicated that Congressman Cunningham is a big supporter of NIH and feels that scientists should be the ones making the decisions on funding. He also said he will relay our messages on support for NIH and our position on the Neugebauer grants amendment.

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## **CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE**

Congress will be off for the July 4th recess July 1– July 11, 2005.

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