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## BUDGET UPDATE

### *FY2006 Budget Resolution – Committee Action*

Last week, the House and Senate Budget Committees approved their respective FY2006 Budget Resolutions. Both the House and Senate largely followed the President's spending recommendations, placing a discretionary spending cap at \$843.4 billion for FY2006. While this represents a slight increase over last year, all of the increase is projected to go to defense and homeland security programs. All other programs would receive a 0.6 percent cut.

The Budget Resolution sets overall discretionary spending targets for the next five years, as well as carves out goals for savings in mandatory programs and tax revenues. It often is silent on funding individual programs, like NIH and NSF.

### *FY 2006 Budget Resolution – Floor Action*

The Senate and House have struggled this week to win approval of the FY 2006 Budget Resolution. Senate Republicans were barely able to fight back attempts to block Arctic National Wildlife Refuge drilling and to require offsets for tax cuts. However, the White House and Republican leaders were dealt a serious blow to their chances of passing a budget resolution when the Senate voted to remove instructions to trim \$15 billion from mandatory programs (mostly from Medicaid). Republicans forging a compromise \$2.6 trillion budget will have to balance a House plan that exceeds President Bush's planned cuts in Medicaid and other programs against a Senate outline that ignores many of the proposed reductions. Earlier in the week, House Budget Chairman Nussle predicted that if the Medicaid amendment passed, it was unlikely the two chambers would agree on a House-Senate conference on the budget (concurrent budget resolution).

We will have to wait and see if Chairman Nussle's prediction comes true because the House and Senate will not meet in conference to sort out their differences until after the Easter break recess. When they return from the recess, their goal will be to produce a final Budget Resolution by April 15 so that Appropriations Subcommittees will be able to receive an allocation and begin work on the FY2006 appropriations bills. Republican leaders cannot use "reconciliation" procedures to expedite passage of tax and mandatory spending cuts without successful adoption of a budget resolution.

### *NIH Amendment*

Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA) introduced an amendment (to the Budget Resolution) to increase funding for the NIH by \$1.5 billion in FY 2006. Specifically, the amendment recommended increasing the budget's function 550, which covers health, by \$1.5 billion for NIH. Within an hour of Senator Specter introducing the amendment, FASEB's Office of Public Affairs sent a [letter](#) to all members of the Senate urging them to vote in favor of the amendment. The Senate approved the amendment by a vote of 63-37. If the amendment is agreed to by the House, it would allow \$29.9 billion for NIH in FY2006.

During debate on the amendment, Senator Specter described NIH's portion (\$28 billion) of the overall U.S. budget (\$2.6 trillion) as, "totally, totally, totally insufficient." He implored the Senate to make the NIH a priority in the budget and stated that there is nothing more important than one's health. He said, "If you don't have health, you can't do anything else."

Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (the committee with jurisdiction over a possible NIH reauthorization bill), urged his colleagues to vote no and commented that while he strongly supports the mission of the NIH, he believes the budget process is not the place to determine specific levels of funding for individual agencies (he said that determining specific funding levels should only occur during the appropriations process). He also talked of the importance of reducing the deficit. In addition, Senator Enzi remarked that he is looking forward to reauthorizing the NIH and complimented the agency on its peer review process.

Budget Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH) spoke of the need for the Senate to display fiscal discipline. He noted that the NIH has experienced a huge expansion in the past few years and recommended that there should be a "brief period to make sure those dollars are being used efficiently."

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

Senators Specter and Harkin once again displayed their commitment to and passion for the National Institutes of Health when they introduced their amendment to the Budget Resolution to increase funding for the NIH by \$1.5 million in FY 2006. The vote on their amendment is being viewed by many as largely a symbolic effort to provide more money for biomedical research. It is very unlikely that the amendment will survive the House-Senate budget conference. However, the vote places the Leadership in the House and Senate as well as the Chairs of the Budget and Appropriations Committee on notice that a large majority of Senators voted in favor of increasing the President's proposal for NIH in FY 2006. This should not be underestimated! FASEB's Office of Public Affairs intends to use the result of this vote in its strategy to find new Champions of research. The Senators who voted in favor of the amendment will be thanked and reminded of this commitment at every stage of the upcoming appropriations process. In addition, we plan to visit and state our case to those Senators who voted against the Specter/Harkin amendment. Therefore, even though this amendment is a powerful tool for us to use in our advocacy efforts, we have a lot more to do to ensure that research is adequately supported in FY2006.

We also would like to thank all of the FASEB member society scientists who took the time to be heard on this issue by writing letters of support to their respective Senators.

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## **FASEB MEETINGS ON THE HILL**

### *Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)*

On March 14, FASEB President Paul Kincade and Jon Retzlaff, FASEB's Director of Legislative Relations, spent one hour meeting with Roland Foster, Legislative Director for Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK). Dr. Kincade covered a myriad of subjects including the fact that the NIH doubling will be erased in a few years if funding continues at the President's proposed rate, the extraordinary opportunities that exist today (in the field of science), the conflict of interest issue, the burdens that regulatory rules create, and the importance of NSF's science education initiatives.

Mr. Foster was Senator Coburn's health staffer during his service on the House Science and House Energy and Commerce Committees. Therefore, Mr. Foster is well aware of many of the issues affecting both NSF and NIH. Mr. Foster informed us that Senator Coburn is a budget hawk, but he did support the doubling of NIH's budget while serving in the House of Representatives. He also told us that Senator Coburn is especially interested in seeing the government place a much greater focus on prevention.

Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL)

On March 8, Bruce Korf, MD, Ph.D., Professor and Chairman of the Department of Genetics at the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB) School of Medicine, Joann A. Boughman, Ph.D., Executive Vice President, American Society of Human Genetics, and Jon Retzlaff, FASEB's Director of Legislative Relations, met with Senator Shelby's Legislative Director, Shannon Hines.

Dr. Korf discussed his concerns with the President's proposal for NIH in FY 2006 and shared his hope that the science building currently being constructed on UAB's campus (and named after Senator Shelby) will be filled to capacity with young scientists.

Ms. Hines informed us that Senator Shelby has been very supportive of Senator Specter and his efforts to double NIH's budget. In addition, the Senator especially is looking forward to his new role as Chairman of the Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee (NSF and NASA are part of) because of his interest in science.

House L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee Staff

On March 15, 2005, FASEB President Paul Kincade, and Jon Retzlaff, FASEB's Director of Legislative Relations, met with Sue Quantius, L/HHS Appropriations Subcommittee staff assistant. Ms. Quantius oversees the NIH account on the Subcommittee. Ms. Quantius recommended that FASEB's outreach concentrate on discussing the exciting areas of research and highlighting the ways that basic research impacts the general public. Ms. Quantius also informed us that while Chairman Regula is very supportive of Dr. Zerhouni's open access policy, he did voice concern when the compliance date was extended from six months to one year. Chairman Regula is anxious to see how the policy works and whether scientists will comply.

Representative Bill Young (R-FL)

On March 15, 2005, FASEB President Paul Kincade and Jon Retzlaff, FASEB's Director of Legislative Relations, met with Brent Jacquet, Health Legislative Assistant to former House Appropriations Committee Chairman Bill Young (R-FL). Mr. Jacquet informed us that Chairman Young is very supportive of Dr. Zerhouni's enhanced access policy as well as his position on the recent conflict of interest issue. In addition to FASEB's concerns with the FY2006 outlook for science funding, Dr. Kincade mentioned that FASEB's member societies are concerned about possible attempts (during the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization) to regulate research on rats, mice and birds under the Animal Welfare Act. Mr. Jacquet said that Chairman Young is supportive of FASEB's position.

Meetings with Representative Costa and Melancon

On Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup> Dr. Andrea Stith, FASEB Science Policy Analyst, Gary Kline, FASEB Legislative Analyst and Ellen Weiss, Public Affairs Manager Biophysical Society met with Scott Nishioki, Chief of Staff for Congressman Jim

Costa (D-CA) and Erin Daste, Legislative Aide, for Congressman Charlie Melancon (D-LA). Both legislators are freshman on the House Science Committee.

At these meetings the FASEB and Biophysical Society representatives introduced FASEB to the staff members and offered support on issues the Science committee will be faced with during the upcoming session. Mr. Nishioki stated that Congressman Costa is very supportive of science and expressed an interest in learning more about science and our global economic competitiveness. Both staff members were appreciative our visit and expressed an interest in learning more about our issues.

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## OTHER FASEB ACTIVITIES

### FASEB Meets with Members On Stem Cell Bill

On Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, Jon Retzlaff, FASEB Director of Legislative Relations, Dr. Carrie Wolinetz, FASEB Associate Director for Communications, and Gary Kline, FASEB Legislative Analyst joined other health advocacy groups in a meeting with Congressmen Mike Castle (R-DE), Charles Bass (R-NH) and Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Sara Resnick Chamberlain, Executive Director of the Republican Mainstreet Partnership. This meeting was set up to discuss strategies for trying to pass HR 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005.

Castle, Kirk and Bass urged the group to get out and use the power of their organizations to get Members to sign on as co-sponsors to the legislation. The members said that it is important for the groups present to have their membership write letters. In an effort to do this, FASEB has set up two alerts which can be found here: <http://capwiz.com/faseb/home/>. To date, this legislation has 180 co-sponsors but the Members said they would like to have 200. This large number of co-sponsors would send a strong message of support to the leadership.

Castle and Bass said they would use all available legislative means necessary to get this passed, including attaching it to an NIH reauthorization bill or the FY 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services and Appropriations bill.

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## RECENT HEARINGS

*House L/HHS Hearing on NIH's FY2006 Budget*

On March 9, 2005, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, and Education (Rep. Ralph Regula [R-OH], Chairman) held its NIH Overview hearing on the FY2006 Budget, with Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director, NIH, testifying. Chairman Regula recognizes that NIH has enormous challenges and needs to be supported. Dr. Zerhouni acknowledged that \$28 billion is a lot of money. However, he pointed out that this amount equates only to \$96 per American per year. This \$96 per American per year should be compared in relation to the \$5500 per American per year that is spent on health care costs. Representative Obey voiced concerns that the President's budget would result in:

- 1) the number of research project grants will decrease this year and next year (500 less grants);
- 2) the number of new and competing grants will decrease by 1200 compared to two years ago;
- 3) success rates will fall to 21%;
- 4) training fellowships will decline by 400;
- 5) inflationary increases will not be granted to non-competing grants.

In an impressive display of interest and (hopefully) commitment, full Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) attended the entire hearing. He appeared to be very supportive of research and stated that he feels strongly that R&D needs to be on a healthy growth track. He discussed a 1995 meeting (to discuss possible rescissions to that year's budget) where Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich asked the Appropriations subcommittee chairmen to refrain from cutting research when looking for programs to cut.

#### *House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee Hearing on NIH*

On March 17, 2005, House Committee on Energy and Commerce (Rep. Joe Barton [R-TX], Chairman), Subcommittee on Health (Rep. Nathan Deal [R-GA]) held a hearing to look at how portfolio management could be improved at NIH. The hearing was part of the Committee's efforts to learn more as it begins to think about reauthorizing the NIH. Dr. Elias Zerhouni, Director, NIH, was the only individual testifying.

In his [opening statement](#), Dr. Zerhouni spoke of the need for a new Office of Portfolio Analysis and Strategic Initiatives (OPASI). NIH has requested \$2 million in FY2006 to create OPASI, which will be part of the Office of the Director. The new office will focus its attention on "creating better institutional tools to analyze, assess and manage the NIH-wide research portfolio and to provide better information to support priority setting-decisions in areas of common interest to all Institutes and Centers."

[Chairman Joe Barton](#) (R-TX) applauded Dr. Zerhouni's determination to clean up the conflict of interest situation at NIH and expressed a desire to provide the NIH Director with more authority. He also questioned why so many Institutes and Offices within the Office of the Director are needed.

The issue of human embryonic stem cells was addressed by numerous members. The Democrats (Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO), Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA), and Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)) attempted to direct Dr. Zerhouni to state that President Bush's policy is inadequate to move the field forward. Rep. Michael Ferguson (R-NJ) stated that adult stem cells hold as much promise as human embryonic stem cells, a sentiment echoed by Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA).

Representative Capps also expressed concern that the voluntary public access policy is unwise. She believes it should be mandatory for scientists to submit their information. Rep. Gene Green (R-TX), too, inquired about the policy, asking why it had been changed from six to twelve months.

Representative Fred Upton (R-MI) expressed concern with some of the projects (grants) that NIH supports. For example, he commented that the study on sex at truck stops does not appear to seem to measure up with many of the other worthwhile projects that NIH funds. This was in contrast to Rep. Baldwin, who spoke strongly in support of the importance of behavioral research at NIH.

#### *House Committee on Science, Research Subcommittee, on NSF Management*

On March 10, the House Committee on Science, Subcommittee on Research held a hearing titled "National Science Foundation: Budget and Management Challenges." The witnesses were Dr. Arden Bement, Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF); Dr. Mark Wrighton, Chairman of the Audit and Oversight Committee of the National Science Board (NSB); and Dr. Christine Boesz, Inspector General of NSF.

Congressman Bob Inglis (R-SC) is the new Chair of the Subcommittee on Research of the Committee on Science, and Congresswoman Darlene Hooley (D-OR) is the ranking member. In his [opening statement](#) Mr. Inglis praised basic research as the lifeblood of innovation and the significant role of the federal government in supporting science agencies like NSF.

In his [statements](#), Dr. Bement focused on NSF's four priority areas (strengthening core research, providing broadly accessible cyber infrastructure and research facilities, broadening participation in science and engineering workforce, and sustaining organizational excellence in NSF management practices). In discussing the FY2006 budget, Dr. Bement described the agency's plan to decrease the number of program proposal solicitations in order to focus NSF's resources on programs that are doing well (Some programs have success rates of 10%. Programs like these will likely be eliminated).

[Dr. Wrighton](#) focused on the role of NSB and its review and approval of NSF's FY2006 budget, while [Dr. Boesz](#) highlighted her office's assessment of the strategic management of NSF resources and its improved financial performance. The issues of the management of resources related to the flat budget and the

need to devote more resources to making business and process improvements, while also planning for the agency's future workforce needs.

In their questioning, the Committee members seemed most concerned by the cuts in NSF education grants, the cost of the ice breaking effort, and what flat funding of NSF will mean for U.S. science leadership.

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## CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE & UPCOMING EVENTS

The House and Senate will be on Easter recess from March 19 – April 3.

*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/>