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BUDGET UPDATE

Congressional Schedule

The House and Senate Budget Committees have tentatively set March 9th and 10th as targets for marking up their respective FY2006 budget resolutions. The budget resolution will set overall discretionary spending targets for the next five years, as well as carve out goals for savings in mandatory spending programs and tax revenues. The budget debates may reach the House and Senate floor as soon as the week of March 14th.

Outlook

President Bush's budget includes \$840.3 billion for discretionary programs, a 2.1 percent increase over last year. However, all of this increase is dedicated to defense and homeland security programs. Non-homeland security/non-defense discretionary funding would receive a 0.6 percent cut.

The majority of Congress appears less concerned with the amount allocated for non-defense discretionary programs than with the President's proposals to cut Medicaid spending and agricultural subsidies. The White House is discovering that support for farm programs is deep and widespread, particularly in the Senate, where Agriculture Committee Chairman Chambliss and Appropriations Committee Chairman Cochran are staunch advocates for their states' farmers. House Republican leaders met with its members to gauge reaction to the President's budget and House Majority Leader Tom Delay (R-TX) was quoted as saying, "They're all ready to go. Some of them want more cuts."

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REORGANIZATION OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

The Reorganized Senate Appropriations Panel

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) has achieved consensus within his committee to make their subcommittee jurisdictions more compatible with the House. While the Senate's plan is similar in many respects to House Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis' new 10-panel structure, there are differences. The Senate decided to go along with the House in dismantling the VA/HUD Subcommittee, but it keeps the Legislative Branch and District of Columbia panels separate. However, the Senate and House plans appear to roughly mirror each other with respect to the science agencies. As in the House, the Senate Subcommittee on Science, Justice and Commerce was reconfigured to include NSF and NASA.

Senator Cochran decided to give up his chairmanship of the Homeland Security subcommittee in order to gain support for the changes. His decision allowed other Subcommittee Chairmen to move around. Christopher "Kit" Bond, formerly chairman of VA-HUD, decided to take over Transportation. Richard Shelby (R-AL) decided to replace Judd Gregg as Chairman of the Science, Justice and Commerce Subcommittee. Thus, Senator Shelby now will have responsibility for NSF and NASA.

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

FASEB's Office of Public Affairs is pursuing a strategy to convince Members of Congress and their staff that scientific research needs to be a priority in this year's budget.

Paul Kincade, FASEB's President, recently met with Senate Budget Committee staffers (majority, Judd Gregg (R-NH), and minority, Kent Conrad (D-ND)) as well as staff to Members serving on the Budget Committee (Rep. Wicker (R-MS) and Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO)) to discuss the dire consequences that would result from funding NIH and NSF at levels far below the inflation rate. The staffers spoke highly of both NIH and NSF and are supportive of funding science, but are not optimistic that

money will be available to provide significant increases to either agency. FASEB also is coordinating with the Campaign for Medical Research to visit Members of the Budget Committees on March 16th and 17th.

In addition, FASEB is working with Senator Specter's staff and other groups that advocate for medical research to increase NIH funding during Senate debate on the FY2006 Budget Resolution. Last year, Senator Specter introduced an amendment to the budget resolution to increase funding for the NIH by \$800 million. His amendment was only one of three amendments to pass (out of a total of more than 50 offered).

We have assured Senator Specter's staff that FASEB member societies will do everything possible to support their efforts. We plan to ask permission from FASEB's twenty-two societies to contact their respective 65,000 Society members and urge them to send letters and e-mails to their Congressional representatives (utilizing the Cap Wiz program). We also will recruit FASEB society members to submit "letters to the editor" to their local papers. The purpose would be to reinforce a Members' statement or action or point out the problem with his/her position. In addition, FASEB's Office of Public Affairs will coordinate with other health groups to place ads in Congressional publications, such as *Roll Call* or *Congress Daily*.

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FASEB MEETINGS ON THE HILL

Congressman Joe Schwarz (R-MI)

On Thursday, February 22nd, Gary Kline (OPA), Chris Rorick (Endo) and Rebecca Osthus (APS) met with Mr. Jared Page, Health LA for Congressman Joe Schwarz (R-MI). Dr. Schwarz is a former Otolaryngologist and currently a freshman legislator on the House Science Committee.

FASEB presented Mr. Page with its FY 2006 funding report and indicated that a major concern was the lack of resources for biomedical and physical research. The group also indicated that other areas of interest were stem cell research, the reauthorization of the farm bill and rats, mice and birds, as well as the politicization of scientific grants by Congress.

Mr. Page asked FASEB to keep in touch and to provide him with a list of caucuses that it believes Congressman Schwarz should join.

Congressman Russ Carnahan (D-MO)

On Friday, February 25th, Dr. Carrie Wolinetz (OPA) and Gary Kline (OPA) met with Jill Allen, Health LA, for Congressman Russ Carnahan (D-MO). Congressman Carnahan is a freshman legislator on the House Science Committee.

During the meeting, Dr. Wolinetz and Mr. Kline spoke of the benefits of the government investing in science and the issue of stem cell research.

Ms. Allen asked FASEB to stay in touch and to provide her educational materials on science and research.

Congressman Michael Castle (R-DE) and Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO)

On March 2nd, OPA staff members Jon Retzlaff, Gary Kline and Dr. Carrie Wolinetz met with Meghan Taira, Health Policy Advisor to Congresswoman Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Elizabeth Wenk, Deputy Chief of Staff to Congressman Michael Castle (R-DE). Congressman Castle and Congresswoman DeGette are the two major co-sponsors of H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005, which aims to expand the number of stem cell lines available for federal funding.

Ms. Taira and Wenk indicated that H.R. 810 currently has over 170 co-sponsors, 30 less than their desired goal of 200. They asked FASEB for help in generating additional co-sponsors and have provided us with a targeted list of Representatives to focus on. Wenk and Taira also indicated that they would appreciate FASEB's help in identifying a scientist to speak at a briefing designed to educate congressional staff on the science behind stem cell research.

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OTHER FASEB ACTIVITIES

Science & Security Coalition Update on Coleman Visa Bill

The Science & Security Coalition, of which FASEB is an active member, was briefed on February 23 by Lorianne Woodrow of Senator

Norm Coleman's (R-MN) staff on the American Competitiveness Through International Openness Now (ACTION) Act of 2005. This bill, introduced by Senators Coleman and Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), is aimed at resolving visa issues, particularly in regard to foreign students studying in the United States. Most of the bill would likely be uncontroversial, including provisions to "market" the U.S. to potential foreign students through a PR campaign and adjustments to the SEVIS (program that tracks international students) fees. There are also directives asking the State Department to re-examine visa reciprocity agreements with foreign nations and the FBI to improve their systems operability with the Departments of State and Homeland Security.

However, Section 8 of the bill has a major political hurdle to overcome: a statutory change that would change the "214(b)" clause of immigration law. This clause directs consular officers to judge whether a visa applicant is trying to permanently immigrate to the U.S., based on factors such as family ties, property ownership and standing in the community, and to reject them if they cannot prove the person is *not* trying to immigrate. 214(b) is the single, largest reason for visa rejection, particularly for students and young scientists from developing countries, who have trouble meeting these standards. The Coleman bill would alter the language of 214(b), changing the criteria to whether an applicant has sufficient financial means and a legitimate academic intent to complete a program in the U.S. This is a significant change in the law, and will likely incur a major Congressional debate. The Science & Security Coalition will be meeting again on March 17th to discuss this bill and its implications.

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BILLS, BILLS, BILLS

FASEB Supports The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005

FASEB sent out a legislative alert this week asking scientists to contact lawmakers in support of the House (H.R. 810) and Senate (S. 471) versions of "The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005". FASEB President Paul Kincade, Ph.D. also sent letters of support to Chairman Barton (R-TX) and Ranking Member Dingell (D-MI) of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, as well as to the Representatives Deal (R-GA) and Brown (D-OH), Chair and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Health, to which the bill has been referred. Similar letters will be sent to the relevant Senate committee, most likely the committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). Citing President Bush's policy that allows Federal funding only for embryonic stem cell lines derived prior to August 9, 2001, Dr. Kincade states, "[W]e have seen no indication that the

Administration is willing to rethink its position. It is now time for Congress to take action in the best interests of the American people.”

The alert (<http://www.faseb.org/opa/lac/>) asks scientists to thank sponsors of the bill and urge lawmakers who have not yet signed on to become sponsors. FASEB also sent letters to the introducers of the bill Representative Michael Castle (R-DE) and Diana DeGette (D-CO) and Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), thanking them for their leadership on embryonic stem cell and other biomedical research issues. Copies of the letters will be available on FASEB’s web site: <http://www.faseb.org>. On March 2, FASEB Office of Public Affairs staff Jon Retzlaff, Carrie Wolinetz and Gary Kline met with the lead staff on the issue from Castle and DeGette’s offices to strategize future steps. The staffers thanked FASEB for our support on this issue. Next week, Wolinetz and Kline will meet with Congressman Castle himself and other representatives of the biomedical research community to discuss the bill.

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CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE & UPCOMING EVENTS

Agency/Department	Committee	Hearing	Date/Time
HHS	House Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee	HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt Budget Overview	March 3 rd 10:15am 2358 RHOB
NIH	House Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee	National Institutes of Health FY 2006 Budget	March 9 th 10:15 2358 RHOB
NIH	Senate Labor HHS Appropriations Subcommittee	National Institutes of Health FY 2006 Budget	April 6 th
NSF	House Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies Appropriations	National Science Foundation FY 2006 Budget	March 11 th 10am 2359 RHOB

	Subcommittee		
NSF	*Senate VA- HUD Appropriations Subcommittee	National Science Foundation FY 2006 Budget	February 17 th

*As of March 3rd, renamed Commerce, Justice and Science subcommittee

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