

*Science Funding, continued from page 1*

A total of \$7.4 billion of the research funding will be transferred to Institutes and Centers and to the Common Fund. The remaining \$800 million is to be used for research that can be completed within two years, with a priority “on short-term grants that focus on specific scientific challenges, new research that expands the scope of ongoing projects, and research on public and international health priorities,” according to the Conference Report on the stimulus bill.

During debate on the Specter-Harkin amendment, Sen. Specter acknowledged the funding crisis the NIH has been facing. “There has been an actual decline of some \$5.2 billion of NIH funding in the last seven years,” Specter said. “This \$10 billion allocation, if enacted, would correct that.”

Much of the debate about the overall stimulus plan focused on the ability of its various provisions to create jobs. Specter answered that charge by saying, “According to Acting NIH Director Dr. Raynard Kington, the \$10 billion would result in the creation of some 70,000 jobs over the next two years. These funds could go out in a range of six to nine months, and certainly in less than a year, so it has the impact of being promptly disseminated.”

While the Senate deliberated the Specter amendment, ASCB President Brigid Hogan sent a letter to Sen. Specter offering the ASCB’s support. Hogan said, “Your amendment, increasing the NIH stimulus funding to \$10 billion over two years, would benefit the American biomedical research enterprise while having a significant impact on the American economy.”

Because of concerns about the long-term implications of a quick infusion of money,

Hogan also urged Specter to consider carefully the long-term future of the NIH and NIH-funded researchers. “After repairing past damage,” Hogan said, “the ASCB hopes that in the years to come, Congress and the President will join together to provide the NIH and American researchers with steady and dependable annual budget increases. It is also our hope that the NIH will devote a majority of the \$10 billion in the stimulus package for investigator-initiated basic research, the cornerstone of medical advances in the United States.”

## National Science Foundation

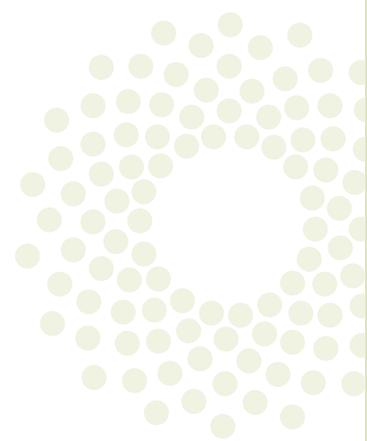
The final version of the stimulus bill also provides the National Science Foundation with \$3.02 billion, to be spent over two years. This is the same figure as proposed by the House and up dramatically from the \$1.402 billion allotted by the Senate. The \$3.02 billion includes \$2.5 billion for research, \$100 million for education and human resources, \$400 million for major research equipment and facilities construction, and \$2 million for the NSF’s Office of Inspector General.

## Other Federal Science Programs

The final stimulus bill also contains funding for other federal science programs, including \$400 million for climate change research at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and \$1.6 billion for the U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Science.

To read the ASCB’s letter to Sen. Specter in support of his amendment to increase funds for the NIH, go to [www.ascb.org/newsfiles/Specterlettersupportingstimulusamendment.pdf](http://www.ascb.org/newsfiles/Specterlettersupportingstimulusamendment.pdf). ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



## Peer-Review Changes Begin

In June 2007, then National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Elias Zerhouni created two working groups to review and suggest changes to the NIH’s peer-review system. One year later, the NIH announced changes.

Those changes are already starting to be implemented, beginning with applications submitted for the January 2009 deadline. The first changes taking place are changes to the review and scoring process, the clustering

of applications from new investigators, and a reduction in the number of times an application can be resubmitted. Changes to the application process, including new, shorter applications, will not begin until the FY2011 funding cycle.

For more information about the changes under way, and a timetable for future changes, go to <http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson