

2010 NIH Budget Coming into Focus

Congress Removes White House Earmarks

Fiscal Year 2010 has not begun but we already have a good idea what the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) FY10 budget will be: likely between 1% and 3% more than the FY09 budget.

Before leaving Washington, DC, for the August recess, both the U.S. House and Senate Appropriations Committees passed versions of NIH funding bills. The House FY10 Departments of Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education (LHHSE) Appropriations bill includes an overall NIH budget of \$31.258 billion. That's \$941 million, or 3.01%, more than the FY09 NIH budget. It's also \$500 million more than requested by President Obama for FY10.

The Senate Appropriations Committee decided to match the President's request of \$30.758 billion, \$441 million, or 1.4%, more than last year. Sen. Harkin, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on LHHSE, and a long-time NIH champion, explained

that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act \$10 billion NIH funding was why the Committee provided the NIH with a small annual appropriation. Harkin said, "Instead of providing even more increases to programs that did very well in the Recovery Act, this bill instead emphasizes several other important programs."

President Obama's FY10 NIH budget request included a \$268 million earmark for cancer research and a \$19 million earmark for autism research. These earmarks represent more than half of Obama's proposed FY10 NIH increase. Both House and Senate Appropriations Committees rejected that proposal. In the report accompanying the House bill, the House Committee said that it "believes it is more appropriate to allocate funding in a way that permits scientific peer review to decide the most promising research to support." The Senate Committee's report called the earmark proposals a "harmful precedent." ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

Congressional Leaders Want Top 10 List

What is the global competitiveness of U.S. research institutions? That's what four senior U.S. Congresspeople want the National Academies of Science (NAS) to determine.

The four members, Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), Chair of the House Science and Technology Committee, Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX), the ranking Republican on the House Science and Technology Committee, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, and Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN), wrote the NAS.

The U.S. Representatives want the NAS to provide Congress with the top 10 actions that must be taken to "assure the ability of the American research university to maintain the

excellence in research and doctoral education needed to help the United States compete, prosper, and achieve national goals for health, energy, the environment, and security in the global community of the 21st century."

This request is similar to a request in 2005 that led to the NAS report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*. The report results led Congress to write the American COMPETES Act. That bill provided a blueprint for doubling funding for non-National Institutes of Health U.S. basic research. The report also focused congressional attention on the need to improve math and science teaching.

To read the letter to the NAS, go to www.mikulski.senate.gov/_pdfs/Press/NationalAcademiesLetter.pdf. ■

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