

## Red Herrings Delay NSF Authorization

What do a Supreme Court nomination and online pornography have to do with federally funded science? The answer is everything if you are a U.S. Congressperson in an election year. A motion offered by Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives delayed reauthorization of the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act, which first became law in 2007. (See September 2007 *ASCB Newsletter*.)

The legislation, if passed and signed into law, would reauthorize spending for the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Office of Science at the U.S. Department of Energy. Programs to support education and training in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics would also be authorized.

But the motion offered by Republicans shortly before the anticipated passage of the legislation would have frozen funding at FY10 levels and reduced the length of the reauthorization. It also would have barred the federal government from paying government employees disciplined for viewing pornography

on their work computers and would have prohibited the federal government from providing funds to institutions of higher learning if they denied or restricted campus access by Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or military recruiters.

Both provisions were political red herrings. The pornography provision was the result of news reports that employees at the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission had been viewing pornography at work. A review of U.S. Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan's record as dean of Harvard Law School inspired the military recruiting provision. Members of the House could have been forced to vote for the funding cuts to avoid voting against the politically sensitive pornography and recruiting provisions.

Ultimately, the original bill was passed under a procedure normally reserved for voting on appropriations bills and in impeachment proceedings. Under that procedure, Members of Congress could vote separately on the various provisions of the Republican motion, including the pornography and military recruiting provisions. The final vote on the COMPETES Act was 262–150. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

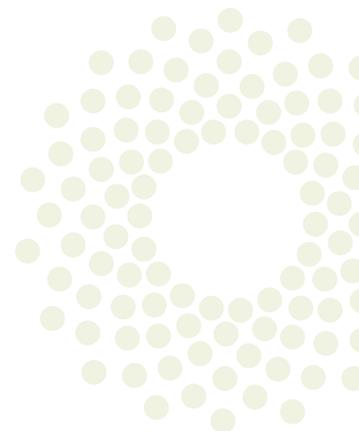
## Obama Nominates Next NSF Head

On June 8, 2010, President Obama nominated Subra Suresh of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to serve as the next head of the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Suresh will replace Arden Bement, who served as head of the NSF since 2004.

Suresh has served as dean of MIT's School of Engineering since 2007. Before joining the MIT faculty in 1993, he taught at Brown University.

Unlike previous nominees, Suresh maintains his own lab, which focuses on the nanomechanics of biomaterials. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



## U.S. Measures Impact of Federally Funded Research

One of the few things scientists and politicians can agree on is the power of data. Scientific research depends on it, and politicians use it as either a sword or a shield.

In an effort to document the impact of U.S. government investment in research and development, the U.S. National Institutes of Health, the U.S. National Science Foundation, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy have created the Science and Technology for America's Reinvestment: Measuring the Effect of Research on Innovation, Competitiveness and Science (STAR METRICS) program.

In the beginning the program will measure the impact of federal money on jobs. In the long term, it is hoped that it will also be able to track patents received, publications, citations, and business start-ups.

The first phase of the STAR METRICS program will measure the impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The second phase will gauge the impact of science funding on four specific areas:

- Economic growth
- Workforce outcomes
- Scientific knowledge
- Social outcomes

The STAR METRICS program results will be based on data collected from federal funding agencies and research institutions that volunteer to participate in the program. Sixty agencies and institutions have volunteered so far.

For more information about STAR METRICS, go to [http://nrc59.nas.edu/star\\_info2.cfm](http://nrc59.nas.edu/star_info2.cfm). ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

## Congress Hears from ASCB Council

Seven members of the ASCB Council spent May 26, 2010, on Capitol Hill meeting with Members of Congress and their staff. They talked about the importance of federal funding for basic research.

ASCB Council members Ray Deshaies, Holly Goodson, Kathy Green, Brigid Hogan, Tim Mitchison, Sandy Schmid, and JoAnn Trejo had meetings with 12 Congressional offices. The offices represented California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, and North Carolina. Along with meeting with congressional staff, the Council members met with Representative Brian Bilbray (R-CA), newly elected Senator Scott Brown (R-MA), and Representative David Price (D-NC). ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



Left to right: ASCB President-Elect Sandy Schmid, U.S. Representative Brian Bilbray (R-CA), Ray Deshaies, JoAnn Trejo, and ASCB President Tim Mitchison



Left to right: Ray Deshaies, ASCB Past President Brigid Hogan, U.S. Representative David Price (D-NC), ASCB President-Elect Sandy Schmid, and ASCB President Tim Mitchison