

Not Exactly New Faces in Town

Rogers, Hall, and Ryan. It's not the name of a law firm. They are the new chairs of important congressional committees for researchers funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) or the National Science Foundation (NSF).

Harold Rogers (R-KY) will chair the House

Appropriations Committee. He has served in Congress for 30 years. Ralph Hall (R-TX), the new chair of the House Science and Technology Committee, is 88 years old and has the unique distinction of having been both a Democrat and a Republican. Paul Ryan (R-WI) will chair the House Budget Committee.



Harold Rogers



Ralph Hall



Paul Ryan

Ryan was 11 when Hall and Rogers were first elected to Congress.

In the U.S. Senate, Daniel Inouye (D-HI) will remain chair of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee, and John Rockefeller (D-WV) continues as chair of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee. Kent Conrad (D-ND) remains chair of the U.S. Senate Budget Committee.

If these Representatives and Senators represent you, please contact them and introduce yourself and your research. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

“Senator Waste”

U.S. Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK) despises government waste. In an effort to highlight federal government spending he considers wasteful, Coburn issues occasional reports detailing examples of unnecessary spending by various government agencies.

His most recent report, *Wastebook 2010, A Guide to Some of the Most Wasteful Government Spending of 2010*, details 100 examples of what the Senator considers to be needless federal spending. Three of Coburn's examples involve U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding.

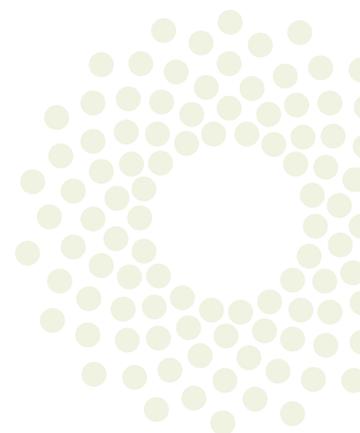
Two of the NIH programs highlighted by the Senator are grants that had been approved by NIH peer review. The two grants, *Diffusion of HIV-1 Among Drug Using Men in SE Asia* and *Community-Based HIV VCT: South Africa*, were described in the *Wastebook 2010* book as “Studying Male Prostitutes in Vietnam” and “Teaching South African Men How to Wash Their Genitalia,” respectively. The third program mentioned by Coburn is funding

to promote HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. This project is described as “NIH Promotes Awareness for Non-Existent Vaccine.”

Congressional criticism of NIH-funded grants is nothing new. The House of Representatives has even voted to defund some grants in the past based on sensational-sounding grant titles. In 2007, the House of Representatives was debating amendments to defund a number of sensational-sounding grants. Former Representative David Obey (D-WI), then Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, criticized efforts to defund individual grants. Obey said, “the day we decide which grants are going to be approved on the basis of a 10-minute horseback debate in the House of Representatives...that is the day we will ruin science research in this country. We have no business making political judgments about those kinds of issues.”

To read Coburn's report, go to <http://tinyurl.com/Wastebook10>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



New Twist on Peer Review

Who says scientists should be the only ones deciding which research grant applications receive federal money? The new leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives is asking citizens to review grants funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

The new Republican majority has launched a website seeking comments from the public on where cuts can be made to the federal budget. The website, You Cut: Changing the Culture in Washington, allows citizens, according to the website, "to vote, both online and on your cell phone, on spending cuts that you want to see the House enact."

The NSF is one of the first federal programs highlighted on the You Cut website. With the help of a video introduction by Representative Adrian Smith (R-NE), visitors to the You Cut website are asked to review grants awarded by the NSF. As Rep. Smith says in his introduction, "I'm

asking your assistance. Help us identify grants that do not support the hard sciences or which you don't think are a good use of taxpayer dollars."

Website visitors are asked to visit the NSF grant database and search for grants. The You Cut website even suggests that visitors use keywords, including success, culture, media, games, social norm, lawyers, museum, leisure, and stimulus, to highlight certain grants. After reviewing the grants, participants are asked to send their email address, the grant award number, and their personal comments to the House Republican leadership.

To review the entire You Cut website, go to <http://majorityleader.gov/YouCut>. The NSF section can be found at <http://majorityleader.gov/YouCut/Review.htm>. Readers may want to note the value of peer review and NSF funding in response. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



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