

ASCB Welcomes New Members of Congress to Washington

It was the neighborly thing to do. After newly elected and reelected members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate were sworn into office, the ASCB sent letters of congratulations.

Along with congratulating the members on their recent electoral victories, my letter as ASCB Public Policy Director offered the services of the ASCB and its members when the Representatives and Senators need information about biological research.

I also included general information about the impact U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding has on the home state of each Senator or Representative. And I noted the number and amount of NIH grants each state received in FY10.

For many new members of Congress, the first few months of their term are intense periods of learning about issues not discussed during their campaigns. New members of Congress and their staff often have basic misconceptions about NIH- and National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded research. Many don't know that large portions of the annual budgets for the NIH and NSF are spent in states and congressional districts all over the U.S. Even more members of Congress don't understand the connection between federally funded research and the companies that supply equipment and reagents to research labs.

For information about the economic impact NIH funding has on your state, go to <http://tiny.cc/economicimpact>. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

Not So Fast, Dr. Collins!

Never ask the U.S. Congress for its opinion—Representatives might tell you what they think. A plan by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) to establish the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and abolish the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) has drawn the attention of Congress.

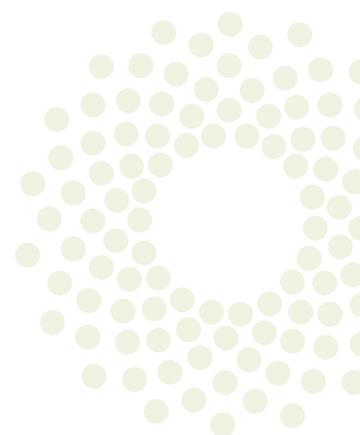
The proposed center would house a number of existing NIH programs, including the Molecular Libraries program, the Therapeutics for Rare and Neglected Diseases program, the newly created Cures Acceleration Network, and the Clinical and Translational Science Award program. The plan was developed by the Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB), an advisory panel of NIH Institute directors and non-NIH scientists charged with finding ways to streamline NIH operations.

Because the number of NIH Institutes and Centers is limited to the current 27, the elimination of an existing center would be required to create NCATS. Since some NCRR programs would be moved to NCATS, the SMRB has proposed that NCRR be eliminated so the NIH can remain under the 27 Institute cap.

By law, the NIH must notify Congress of its plan to create a new center and abolish another one. Congress then has 180 days to react. In response to the plan, the House Appropriations Committee has raised various questions. John Bartrum, a senior staffer for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education, the subcommittee responsible for funding the NIH, has asked some of them. In fact, he posed 25 questions to the NIH regarding the mission of the new center and the decision to eliminate the NCRR. Before moving to Capitol Hill, Bartrum served as budget director for the NIH. In an email requesting the additional information, Bartrum said he was “disheartened” that the NIH had created a website to solicit comments from the NIH community before it consulted with Congress.

It appears that the House Appropriations Committee may consider the creation of NCATS and the elimination of NCRR separately instead of jointly as intended by the NIH. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson



I Say “Investment,” You Say “More Spending”

U.S. President Barack Obama’s 2011 State of the Union speech was many things except raucous. In the days after the shooting in Tucson, AZ, which killed six and injured 13, including Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, a wave of comity swept through the halls of Congress. Instead of Democrats and Republicans sitting according to party during the President’s speech, many members of the House and Senate crossed party lines to sit with colleagues.

This modern version of the “Era of Good Feelings” did away with the pep rally nature of recent presidential speeches. But it did not stop criticism of the policy components of the speech.

A major focus of the President’s speech was the need for the U.S. to make strategic investments to grow the U.S. economy. To make his point, Obama reminded Congress about the U.S. reaction to the Soviet launching of the Sputnik satellite in 1957. Obama said,

“Half a century ago, when the Soviets beat us into space with the launch of a satellite called Sputnik, we had no idea how we would beat them to the moon. The science wasn’t even there yet. NASA didn’t exist. But after investing in better research and education, we didn’t just surpass the Soviets; we unleashed a wave of innovation that created new industries and millions of new jobs.”

Reaction to the State of the Union speech fell into the usual party-line opinions. Democrats hailed the need for investment to create jobs and improve the economy. However, when the President says “invest,” Republicans, especially those in the House of Representatives, hear “spend more.”

This difference of opinion will play out in the coming months as Congress tries to complete the unfinished FY11 budget and construct the FY12 budget. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

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The American Society for Cell Biology

2011 Call for Nominations

Bruce Alberts Award for Excellence in Science Education

Who is Eligible: An individual who has demonstrated innovative and sustained contributions to science education, with particular emphasis on the broad local, regional, and/or national impact of the nominee's activities. Nominators must be ASCB members, but the candidate and support letter authors need not be.

How to Apply: Provide a letter of nomination, a maximum of three letters of support, and CV.

Awards: The winner is presented a plaque and will give remarks at the Annual Meeting. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (electronic submission preferred)

Public Service Award

Who is Eligible: An individual who has demonstrated outstanding national leadership in support of biomedical research. Nominators must be ASCB members. The award winner may, but need not, be a scientist.

How to Apply: Provide a letter of nomination with a description of the nominee's advocacy for, and promotion of, scientific research.

Awards: The winner gives the Public Service Award Lecture at the ASCB Annual Meeting and receives a certificate. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (electronic submission preferred)

Early Career Life Scientist Award

Who is Eligible: An outstanding scientist who has served as an independent investigator for no more than seven years as of March 31.

How to Apply: Provide a nominating package that includes CV, brief research statement, nominating letter, and no more than three letters of support (at least one of which must come from outside the nominee's institution). Nominators must be ASCB members.

Awards: The winner is presented a plaque and an honorarium and will speak in a Minisymposium at the Annual Meeting. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (electronic submission preferred)

E.B. Wilson Medal

Who is Eligible: An individual who has demonstrated significant and far-reaching contributions to cell biology over a lifetime in science. Nominators must be ASCB members, but the candidate need not be.

How to Apply: Provide the candidate's CV and no fewer than three, and no more than five, letters of support.

Awards: The winner of the ASCB's highest honor for science gives the E.B. Wilson Lecture at the Annual Meeting and receives the E.B. Wilson Medal. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (electronic submission preferred)

E.E. Just Lectureship

Who is Eligible: A minority scientist who has demonstrated outstanding scientific achievement. Nominators must be ASCB members, but the candidate need not be.

How to Apply: Provide a nomination package that includes a CV and a letter describing the nominee's scientific achievement and mentoring support of underrepresented minority students and scientists.

Awards: The winner gives the E.E. Just Lecture at the Annual Meeting and receives a plaque and a medal. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (electronic submission preferred)

Merton Bernfield Memorial Award

Who is Eligible: An outstanding graduate student or postdoctoral fellow (at the time of nomination) who has excelled in research

How to Apply: The student or postdoc or his or her advisor should submit a one-page research statement, a CV, a list of publications, a copy of the abstract submitted to the current year's Annual Meeting, and the advisor's letter of recommendation. Postdocs may also submit the recommendation of their graduate student advisor. Duplicate applications from graduate students may be submitted for the Gilula and Bernfield Memorial Awards. Nominators must be ASCB members.

Awards: The winner is presented a plaque an honorarium and will speak at a Minisymposium at the Annual Meeting. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: July 15 (electronic submission preferred)

WICB Career Recognition Awards

Who is Eligible: For the Junior Award, a woman in an early stage of her career (generally less than five years in an independent position at the time of nomination) who is making exceptional scientific contributions to cell biology and exhibits the potential for continuing a high level of scientific endeavor and leadership; for the Senior Award, a woman or man in a later career stage (generally full professor or equivalent) whose outstanding scientific achievements are coupled with a long-standing record of support for women in science and by mentorship of both men and women in scientific careers.

How to Apply: For the Junior Award, provide a letter of nomination, CV, and no more than three letters of support, at least one of which must come from outside the nominee's institution. For the Senior Award, provide a letter of nomination, CV, and no more than five letters of support, at least one of which must come from outside the nominee's institution, to include two letters from those who have been mentored by the candidate, mentioning specifics of the nominee's mentoring history. Nominators must be ASCB members.

Awards: The winners are presented an honorarium and plaque at the Annual Meeting. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid.

Deadline: March 31 (Send electronic submissions *only* to Cheryl Lehr at clehr@ascb.org.)

Norton B. Gilula Memorial Award

Who is Eligible: An outstanding graduate or undergraduate student (at the time of nomination) who has excelled in research or first-year postdocs whose work was performed while a PhD or MD/PhD

How to Apply: The student or advisor should submit a one-page research statement, a CV, a list of publications, if any, the abstract submitted to the current year's Annual Meeting, and the advisor's letter of recommendation. Duplicate applications from graduate students may be submitted for the Gilula and Bernfield Memorial Awards. Nominators must be ASCB members.

Awards: The winner is presented a plaque and a ribbon for his/her poster board. Many expenses to attend the Annual Meeting are paid. Funded by an annual grant from Rockefeller University Press.

Deadline: July 15 (electronic submission preferred)

All electronic applications and nominations should be submitted to ascbinfo@ascb.org. Or mail to:

The American Society for Cell Biology
8120 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 750
Bethesda, MD 20814-2762, USA
ascbinfo@ascb.org

For names of prior awardees or more information, visit www.ascb.org and click on "Awards/Grants," or contact the ASCB at 301-347-9300 or ascbinfo@ascb.org.