Scientists and the New Congress: Using Your Voice to Advocate for Nutrition Research

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FASEB and ASN

• ASN is a FASEB member

• ASN participates in FASEB Public Affairs activities

• Shared interests and common goals
  ➢ Funding for nutrition research at NIH
  ➢ Funding for nutrition research at USDA
  ➢ Implementation of NIFA
  ➢ Farm Bill reauthorization
Today’s Agenda

• Identify federal agencies that fund nutrition research
• Understand the budget and appropriations process
• Discuss role of scientists as advocates
• Review status of current funding for nutrition research
• Discuss advocacy tips and best practices
• Learn about tools and resources to use in your advocacy efforts
• Participate in an interactive exercise
• Funds ~90% of public sector nutrition research
• FY 2010:
  • Nutrition research - 4,500 projects, $1.43 B
  • Obesity research - $824 M
• Leading contributors are NHLBI, NCI, NIDDK
• Implications of nutrition for chronic diseases
• Increasing focus on obesity and related diseases
• Funds most of remaining ~10% of public sector nutrition research not funded by NIH

• National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
  • Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Competitive Grants Program
    • FY 2010 Nutrition and Health Challenge Area - $25 M

• Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
  • FY 2010 Nutrition Research: $90 M
  • Intramural Human Nutrition Research Program and Research Centers

• Economic Research Service (ERS)
  • FY 2010 Nutrition Research: $15.8 M
FEBRUARY
• President submits budget request to Congress

MARCH – APRIL
• Congress adopts “Budget Resolution” (overall budget blueprint)
• Appropriations Subcommittees hold hearings to review agency budget requests

JUNE - JULY
• Appropriations Subcommittees “mark-up” (review/amend) and approve individual bills
• Individual bills are debated/amended and passed by full House and Senate

SEPTEMBER - ???
• Conference committees reconcile differences between House and Senate bills
• Conference agreements approved by the House and Senate
• Bills sent to President for signature/veto
Funding for Nutrition Research: Key Decision Makers

- House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee (LHHS)
- Senate Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee (LHHS)
- House Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA Appropriations Subcommittee
- Senate Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA Appropriations Subcommittee

FDA = Food and Drug Administration
Scientists as Advocates

- Scientists have credibility and expertise

- Not enough for national organizations to advocate on behalf of science—lawmakers want to hear from their own constituents

- You are the best advocate for your interests!
Getting Started

• Your message should be clear and specific
  - Increase funding for AFRI to $500 million in FY 2012

• Personalize your message
  - How does funding for nutrition research affect you?

• Use data to support your position
  - 2008 Farm Bill recommended $700 million for AFRI

• Be aware of trade-offs and be prepared to address them
  - What funding level is achievable?
  - What are the other options?
Current Status of NIH Funding

• FY 2011 (Estimates):
  - NIH: $31 B
  - Nutrition: $1.43 B
  - Obesity: $823 M

• FY 2012 (Requests):
  - NIH: $32 B
  - Nutrition: $1.46 B (est.)
  - Obesity: $837 M (est.)

• FASEB FY 2012 NIH Recommendation: $35 B
• FY 2011 (Estimates):
  ➢ NIFA: $1.48 B
  ➢ AFRI: $262 M
  ➢ ARS: $1.26 B
  ➢ ERS: $15.8 M

• FY 2012 (Requests):
  ➢ NIFA: $1.36 B
  ➢ AFRI: $325 M
  ➢ ARS: $1.15 B
  ➢ ERS: $16.4 M
  ➢ Earmarks eliminated

• FASEB FY 2012 AFRI Recommendation: $500 M
Advocacy Tips & Best Practices

• Address one issue in each message; include it in the subject line
• State your purpose for writing in the first sentence
• Identify a specific bill/legislation you are writing about
• Clearly state your position on the bill/issue and why you support/oppose it
• Include relevant facts and explain why the issue matters to you
• Make a specific request
• Include your postal address in the message
• Keep it short, polite, and to the point
• Use proper grammar, punctuation, and writing style
• Address your message to a specific staff person or use House/Senate website forms:
  https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml
  http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm
Establish connection with members and their staff – e.g. college alumni, church, hometown, local business, volunteer group, etc.

Note the connection along with the contact information of anyone you speak to so you can refer back to it later.

Sign-up to receive constituent newsletters via email.

Find your elected officials on Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking sites.

Attend town hall meetings held by your member of Congress.

Communicate on a regular basis – at least once every few months.

Document visits in your organization or institution’s newsletter (with photos as appropriate).
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Newsletter Mailing List:
http://lyris.faseb.org/subscribe/faseb_washington_update.htm
To Receive E-Action Alerts:
http://www.capwiz.com/faseb/mlm/verify/
Responses You May Hear

• “If you want more money for nutrition research, you need to tell us what other program(s) to cut.”

• “Aren’t several federal agencies and programs already allocating resources to obesity research and prevention?”

• “I’m concerned about possible duplication of nutrition research projects underway at NIH and USDA.”

• “What funding mechanism (competitive or formula) should be used to fund USDA research projects affected by elimination of earmarks?”

• “Sen./Rep. is supportive of nutrition research, but there’s nothing he/she can do in the current budget climate.”