



# The American Physiological Society

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*Integrating  
the Life Sciences  
from Molecule to  
Organism*

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September 22, 2006

The Honorable Joe Barton  
Chair, Energy and Commerce Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the American Physiological Society (APS) and its more than 10,000 member scientists, I am writing to express our support for the National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006. The APS applauds your committed support of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), our nation's premier biomedical research agency. The APS recognizes and is grateful for your demonstrated willingness to work with the scientific community to develop a bill that addresses the needs of the NIH.

Because the NIH is the nation's principal source of funding for the biomedical sciences and is entrusted with the distribution of taxpayer dollars, the APS supports transparency and accountability at the agency. The APS believes that the portfolio management and reporting requirements in the NIH Reform Act will be an important step towards achieving that goal. Further, the establishment of a scientific management review board and a public process to oversee implementation of structural changes at the NIH will ensure that the agency is able to continue to respond to and accommodate the changing scientific landscape.

The APS applauds the budget increases authorized for the NIH as part of the NIH Reform Act. Since the doubling of its budget was completed in 2003, the agency has suffered from sub-inflationary increases that have sharply reduced NIH's ability to fund high-quality research grant proposals. With 5% increases over the next three years, the NIH will be able to prevent further loss to inflation. The agency will be better able to support cutting-edge research and retain the skilled scientific workforce that is crucial to the success of the biomedical research enterprise. Moreover, the emphasis the bill places on peer-reviewed, investigator-initiated research is appropriate. The APS firmly believes that this is the best way to make funding decisions, and that it will ensure that research dollars are spent effectively.

The proposed "Common Fund" will give the NIH more flexibility to fund science that is collaborative and multi-disciplinary. New money should be used to grow the Common Fund to avoid deleterious impacts on ongoing research. Once the Common Fund reaches 5% of the agency's budget, it is important that it be evaluated for its effectiveness. The APS believes that the dollars allocated to the Common Fund would be best spent on investigator-initiated research in peer-reviewed grant mechanisms such as the R01. Such research, which is the engine of medical progress, has diminished in recent years. Achieving the objectives of the Common Fund through

investigator-initiated research would be an excellent way to empower the talent and creativity of our nation's biomedical scientists.

The APS joins the Federated American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) in endorsing the NIH Reform Act of 2006 and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the NIH continues to be successful in the coming years.

Sincerely,

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Dale Benos, Ph.D.  
President  
American Physiological Society