



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

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U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Opening Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Tom Harkin

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Senate Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee on Monday held a hearing to examine the proposed Fiscal 2008 budget for the National Institutes of Health. As part of that hearing, Subcommittee Chairman Tom Harkin delivered the following opening statement.

Welcome to today's Labor-HHS Appropriations Subcommittee hearing on the fiscal year 2008 budget for the National Institutes of Health.

Whenever I talk about NIH, it's a pleasure to sit next to my friend Senator Specter. No one has fought harder to improve biomedical research in this country. He and I worked in lockstep to double funding for NIH between fiscal years 1998 and 2003 — one of my proudest accomplishments in the Senate. I know he shares my disappointment that NIH has fallen on tougher budgetary times since then.

The fiscal year 2007 joint funding resolution that Congress passed a few weeks ago brought some good news, for a change. We increased NIH funding by \$637 million — enough to launch the National Children's Study, add another 500 research grants, and provide additional funding for high-risk grants and young investigators.

Even with that increase, however, FY07 marked the fourth year in a row that NIH funding failed to keep with the costs of inflation. In fact, since the end of the doubling period, in FY03, NIH funding has dropped by about 13 percent in real terms. That cut threatens to squander our nation's investment in biomedical research, delay new cures and treatments, and discourage the next generation of young investigators from entering the field.

The President's fiscal year 2008 budget would make matters even worse. On paper, it would seem to cut NIH funding by \$328 million. But the actual reduction is about \$200 million more (\$529 million), because under the President's budget, NIH would pick up the entire tab for the Global AIDS Fund, rather than sharing it with the State Department.

As a result, comparable funding for the National Cancer Institute would drop by \$79 million, and funding for the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute, by \$36 million. The National Children's Study would be stopped cold.

I assure everyone here: Senator Specter and I will not allow those cuts to stand.

This is the first of six budget hearings on NIH that this Subcommittee will hold this spring. At today's hearing, we will hear first from Elias Zerhouni, the director of NIH. Our second panel will consist of four leading scientists who have received NIH grants. They will discuss the impact of Federal funding on their areas of research and why it's so important to increase our investment in NIH.

All four of these scientists helped produce a new report on NIH entitled "Within Our Grasp or Slipping Away . Assessing a New Era of Scientific and Medical Progress." That report will be released at a press conference immediately following this hearing.

Then next Monday, we will hold a hearing with the directors of 5 NIH Institutes . NINDS, NIDA, NIAAA, NIMH and NIDCD. Before the spring is over, this Subcommittee will hear from the directors of each Institute and Center at NIH.

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