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FASEB HOLDS HOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT AS FY2008 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS CONTINUES; SCIENTISTS VISIT CAPITOL HILL IN SUPPORT OF NIH

Bethesda, MD – The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) expressed disappointment with the proposed funding level for NIH put forward by the House Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee today. While FASEB recognizes this is the first step in a long process, the 2.6% increase proposed would be below the rate of inflation.

“This is the fourth year we’ve seen a proposal for NIH funding that fails to keep pace with inflation. The proposal is significantly lower than the 6.7% increase recommended by FASEB and the broader biomedical research community,” said Leo Furcht, M.D., FASEB President. “The flat funding we have experienced over the past several years has had a devastating effect on the scientific enterprise. Our best and brightest young scientists are being discouraged from pursuing research careers, the pace of discovery has slowed, and we have eroded our ability to take advantage of the wealth of scientific opportunities produced by our investment in NIH.”

Furcht explained that the scientific community ultimately would like a sustainable model for research funding. “To continue our astonishing progress in science and medicine, we need to recoup the losses caused by inflation during the period of flat funding,” he said. To that end, FASEB scientists from across the nation spent two days early this week meeting with members of Congress and their staff. “Our message is simple: a 6.7% increase each year for the next three years would get NIH back on track to restoring the erosion due to inflationary losses,” said Furcht. “FASEB feels strongly that the best messengers to explain the value of biomedical research and why it is so necessary to provide sustainable funding are the scientists working in labs, making breakthrough discoveries.”

Jon Retzlaff, FASEB Legislative Director, agrees. “We have recently generated more than 12,000 letters from researchers all over the country in support of NIH funding,” he said. “It is our hope that Congress will respond positively to the scientists who are working diligently to improve our health and well-being and are dependent on federal funding of life-saving research.”

“As the legislative process continues, we look forward to continuing to work with our champions in the Senate, particularly Senators Harkin and Specter, to try to achieve the predictable funding streams that would make up for loss of purchasing power and capacity,” said Furcht. “Together, we will stand ready to meet the health challenges of today and tomorrow.”

FASEB is composed of 21 societies with more than 80,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB enhances the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. FASEB’s mission is to advance biological science through collaborative advocacy for research policies that promote scientific progress and education and lead to improvements in human health.