



Member Societies

The American Physiological Society
American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
American Society for Investigative Pathology
American Society for Nutritional Sciences
The American Association of Immunologists
American Association of Anatomists
The Protein Society
Society for Developmental Biology
American Peptide Society
Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities
The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research
American Society for Clinical Investigation
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Teratology Society
The Endocrine Society
The American Society of Human Genetics
Society for Gynecologic Investigation
Environmental Mutagen Society
International Society for Computational Biology
American College of Sports Medicine

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Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

----*Quality Life Through Research*----

January 24, 2007

United States House of Representatives
United States Capitol
Washington, DC

Dear Members of House of Representatives:

I am writing to urge swift passage of H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act, on behalf of the 21 professional societies and more than 80,000 biomedical research scientists represented by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). This legislation provides comprehensive protection against discrimination on the basis of genetic information by insurers and employers.

The mapping of the human genome has unveiled a vast, new wealth of information. Our understanding of the genetic underpinning of disease is growing at an exponential rate, and breakthroughs in human medicine seem both near and inevitable. This data will one day reveal every person's genetic predisposition to a variety of diseases and conditions. While this can be used as an important tool to prevent and treat disease, it can unfortunately also be misused as a weapon to discriminate against individuals. Such discrimination is patently unfair – from a scientific or medical viewpoint, it is mainly based on conjecture because predisposition towards a disease is not the same as being inflicted with a disease. Using predictive genetic information, in the absence of a related medical diagnosis, to discriminate against a healthy individual is wrong and should be prohibited.

Current law does not provide sufficient protection against job loss, health insurance cancellation, or denial of coverage as a result of genetic discrimination. Moreover, researchers rely on voluntary participation in research studies to further advance our understanding of the functioning of genes in health and disease. Passage of a federal law against genetic discrimination will eliminate some of the concerns, whether real or perceived, that have deterred some from participating in genetic research studies or seeking genetic testing.

We thank you for your invaluable leadership on this, and many other important health and medical issues, and urge you to act in the next few weeks to set a floor of basic protections for all Americans from genetic discrimination. Please pass H.R. 493, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act.

Sincerely,

Leo T. Furcht, M.D.
FASEB President