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FASEB SCIENTISTS NATIONWIDE URGE SENATE TO PASS BILL TO FUND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Bethesda, MD – “Our nation cannot afford another year of flat funding for medical research,” stated Robert Palazzo, Ph.D., President of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). “This is why FASEB is mobilizing tens of thousands of scientists, all across the country, to support Senators Harkin and Specter’s efforts to pass a funding bill for the National Institutes of Health.”

FASEB has sent out an alert to its 21 member societies and their more than 80,000 members, urging them to contact their Senators to vote for the FY2008 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill. “This is the first step in what will likely be a challenging process,” said Jon Retzlaff, FASEB Director of Legislative Relations. “It is our hope that our scientists can send a strong message to Congress, who can in turn send a strong message to the President, about the devastating effects that a continuing resolution, or an omnibus that does not provide NIH with an increase, would have on medical research.”

“Senators Tom Harkin [D-IA] and Arlen Specter [D-PA] are continuing their extraordinary role as champions for health and education,” said Palazzo. “Clearly, they recognize the priorities of the American people and the importance of maintaining our investment in science. FASEB is immensely grateful for their commitment to support critical agencies, like NIH, during what is a very difficult fiscal and political environment.”

According to Retzlaff, FASEB’s efforts this week will be focused on securing a Senate vote that is strong enough to override threats of a Presidential veto. However, FASEB’s Congressional targets will broaden once the House and Senate resolve their differences and agree on a Labor-HHS-Education appropriations conference report. “We plan to call on our society members once again to ask their respective Member of Congress in the House of Representatives to support the conference report in large numbers. It’s vitally important that an immense amount of momentum is behind this bill before it is sent to the President,” said Retzlaff.

FASEB President Palazzo echoed the importance of countering the veto threat. “I cannot imagine that a President who supports medical research and seeks to improve the health and well-being of our nation would oppose this bill,” he declared. “This legislation is NIH’s only chance to slow the rapid erosion of biomedical research funding that we have been experience over the last five years. We simply cannot tell a patient that has just been diagnosed with a dreaded disease like cancer or Alzheimer’s disease, not to mentioned the families of the millions of other Americans who are experiencing similarly desperate situations, that there are more important priorities than our work to save lives. It is far past time to reverse the declining funding trend for medical research.”

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.