
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
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BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH SCIENTISTS URGE SENATE TO PASS GENETIC NONDISCRIMINATION BILL

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) today urged the Senate to pass legislation this year to assure all Americans a basic level of protection from genetic discrimination by employers and insurers.

"We must not allow differences between alternative approaches to thwart our common goal of protecting Americans from discrimination on the basis of genetic information," commented FASEB President Robert R. Rich. "Fears of discrimination are widespread and threaten life-saving science by discouraging individuals from participating in clinical research," Rich continued.

In correspondence sent to Senators Tom Daschle, Trent Lott, and members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions, FASEB's President stated:

"The mapping of the human genome has unveiled a vast, new wealth of information. This data will one day reveal every person's genetic predisposition to a variety of differing diseases. It can be used as an important tool to prevent and treat disease. It can also be misused as a weapon to discriminate against individuals."

"We are concerned about the chilling effect on biomedical research that is likely to occur in the absence of enhanced protections against genetic discrimination and the resulting loss of scientific knowledge. FASEB believes that a growing number of Americans will be discouraged from participating in vital research for fear of employment and health insurance-related consequences

associated with the release of their genetic information to their employers or health insurance providers. As you know, biomedical advances are dependent on the willingness of individuals to participate in clinical research. Current law does not provide sufficient protection against job loss, health insurance cancellation or denial of coverage as a result of genetic discrimination."

"We understand that there are many more areas of consensus than disagreement between alternative bills, and we urge you to bridge the gap to pass a basic level of nondiscrimination protection for all Americans."

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FASEB is the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. Comprised of 21 scientific societies with more than 60,000 scientist members, FASEB serves as the voice of biomedical scientists nationwide.

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