
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
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Media Advisory

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Homeland Security: FASEB President Contacts Senate, Endorses House-passed HHS/NIH Research Provisions

Attached is a copy of FASEB President Steven L. Teitelbaum's letter to key U.S. Senators regarding the distribution of bioterrorism research funding and decision-making authority in homeland security legislation being debated on the floor of the U.S. Senate today.

For additional information, contact Pat White, FASEB's Director of Legislative Relations, at 202-543-1155 or fpwhite@opa.faseb.org.

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FASEB is comprised of 21 societies with more than 60,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB's mission is to enhance the ability of biomedical and life scientists to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. FASEB serves the interests of these scientists in those areas related to public policy, facilitates coalition activities among Member Societies and disseminates information on biological research through scientific conferences and publications.

September 3, 2002

Dear Senator _____ :

As President of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), I join my scientific colleagues in supporting the efforts of Congress and the Administration to provide adequately for homeland defense against future acts of terrorism. The war against terrorism will require new ways of organizing our daily lives and the conduct of our government and we are grateful for your leadership in addressing this challenge.

We are compelled, however, to express reservations about Amendment No.2 to the National Homeland Security and Combating Terrorism Act, S.2452, as passed by the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs on July 25. The 60,000 member-scientists of FASEB believe that having the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) set bioterrorism research priorities may well prove counterproductive. Specifically, it is our view that:

- (1) ultimate authority in setting bioterrorism research priorities and in the oversight of this research should remain within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and not be transferred to the Department of Homeland Security;
- (2) a broad based research strategy, rather than a 'top-down' approach will ultimately lead to the most important breakthroughs in fighting bioterrorism;
- (3) the scientific expertise for planning and implementing an appropriate bioterror research strategy already exists at NIH; and
- (4) HHS and NIH should act in consultation with the new Department in setting and carrying out the bioterror research agenda.

HHS/NIH, and the dozens of universities and research institutions around the country where NIH-supported research is performed, already have the scientific expertise and research infrastructure in place to carry out the bioterrorism research that our nation needs. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) has historically led the way in research on a wide range of infectious diseases, and we are convinced that hypothesis-driven basic research, rather than a 'top-down' approach, has historically led to the most important advances in biomedical science.

To take the development of the polio vaccine as an example, while Jonas Salk and Albert Sabin are widely credited with developing vaccines that could be readily administered to large populations, their vaccine development relied upon basic research on culturing viruses. John Enders, Thomas Weller and Frederick Robbins shared the Nobel Prize for this work. The same approach has led to countless other

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research breakthroughs and, we argue, is most likely to supply the advances we will need in fighting bioterrorism.

While we support the goal of facilitating a partnership between DHS and HHS, it is our judgment that the ultimate authority for bioterror research should remain at HHS. We therefore join our colleagues at the American Society of Microbiology in supporting the language in Sections 301 and 303 of the House-passed Homeland Security Act, H.R. 5005, which mandates that bioterror research decision-making and funding authority stay at HHS/NIH. We urge you and the Senate to adopt this language.

We are committed to working together with you and the Senate to ensure that research in the fight against bioterrorism gets planned, carried out, and implemented as expeditiously as possible. Taking advantage of the expertise and infrastructure already in place at the HHS and NIH is the most effective way to leverage science in protecting our nation.

Thank you for your leadership in protecting our nation against future terrorist attacks and for your attention to our views.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Teitelbaum, M.D.
FASEB President