

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

Biophysical Society

American Association of Anatomists

The Protein Society

The American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

American Society for Clinical Investigation

The Endocrine Society

The American Society of Human Genetics

Society for Developmental Biology

Associate Members

American Peptide Society

Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities

Society for the Study of Reproduction

Teratology Society

Radiation Research Society

Society for Gynecologic Investigation

Environmental Mutagen Society

International Society for Computational Biology

July 23, 2003

The Honorable Martin Olav Sabo
U.S. House of Representatives
2336 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Sabo:

It was an honor to meet you on Tuesday, July 22nd. I well understand that you had to address other and more pressing business that afternoon and do hope that we will have a chance to discuss the scientific community's concerns about your legislation, H.R. 2613, the Public Access to Science Act. Please allow me to pass on the points we reviewed with Lisa Tomlinson of your staff.

First, we share your interest in increasing access to the findings from biomedical research. As president of FASEB, the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States comprised of 22 societies with more than 60,000 members, we are dedicated to the advancement and dissemination of the fruits of medical research. Our member societies publish 60 journals and have been at the forefront on innovation in scientific publication.

The scientific literature has never been more accessible. The FASEB community is very proud of its contributions to these efforts. As a result of technological innovations and our commitment to reinvest limited profits from publishing to enhance dissemination of research, we have sped the delivery of research content and enhanced search capabilities. Many of our societies have invested heavily to archive past journal articles and now make them available on the Internet for free or for a nominal charge.

We believe that H.R. 2613, The Public Access to Science Act, runs counter to these goals. The bill threatens to destroy the current field of scientific publishing and will harm scientific societies that rely on publishing revenues to support other professional activities. By denying copyright protections to scientists and their publishers, H.R. 2613 will dramatically reduce publishing revenues without reducing the costs of scientific publishing. These revenues are necessary for numerous steps (reviewing of manuscripts, redacting, archiving, etc.) required in the publishing process. Also, we believe that copyright affords important protection for the scientific literature. Both for-profit, and non-profit scientific publishers will be unable to continue to provide these services.

In its place, H.R. 2613 will substitute thousands of existing scientific publishers with an unproven, and we believe unsustainable, model for disseminating vital scientific information. The Public Library of Science (PLOS) is likely to be the short-term beneficiary of this legislation. But, over time, we believe that PLOS will fare no better. Scientific publishing is not inexpensive. Significant costs are required to

July 24, 2003

Page 2

assure the quality of research through peer review, editorial services, production, and dissemination of research. No organization, including PLoS, can absorb all of these costs without sacrificing quality and/or access, or finding alternative sources of revenue to replace lost income. PLoS currently relies on a large grant to subsidize its costs. Its viability is dependent on attracting similar resources in the future.

Furthermore, we believe that the American public benefits from the diverse and decentralized system of scientific publishing that is now threatened by the Public Access to Science Act. The current model provides a wide range of viewpoints and perspectives, specialized scientific expertise necessary to assure the credibility of research through the peer review process, and competitive incentives to improve services.

Any significant changes to the existing system of scientific publication are likely to have serious and lasting consequences on the dissemination of new research knowledge. FASEB believes that it is vital that all stakeholders have a voice in the development of any new policies.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Wells
President