

The lobbying landscape and beyond: 15 groups to know

Strolling through Washington, DC, one might easily overlook the ordinary office buildings lining the streets that house some of the most powerful science lobbyists and advocacy groups in the US. No matter who wins in the US election, these organizations will continue to influence what goes on in research labs—from how much federal funding scientists receive to the types of restrictions imposed on stem cell research. Although countless patient groups and professional societies wield power on Capitol Hill, Nature Medicine has singled out 15 organizations of special interest to the medical researcher.

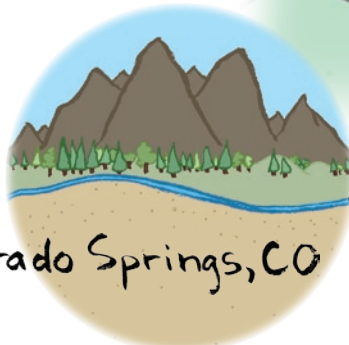
① Founded in 1912, the Federation of **American Societies for Experimental Biology** (FASEB) has grown to encompass 21 societies that have a total of more than 80,000 members. In 2006, the organization spent more than \$160,000 on lobbying. FASEB promotes funding for agencies such as the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), and is working to ensure that both US presidential candidates make research investment a top priority.

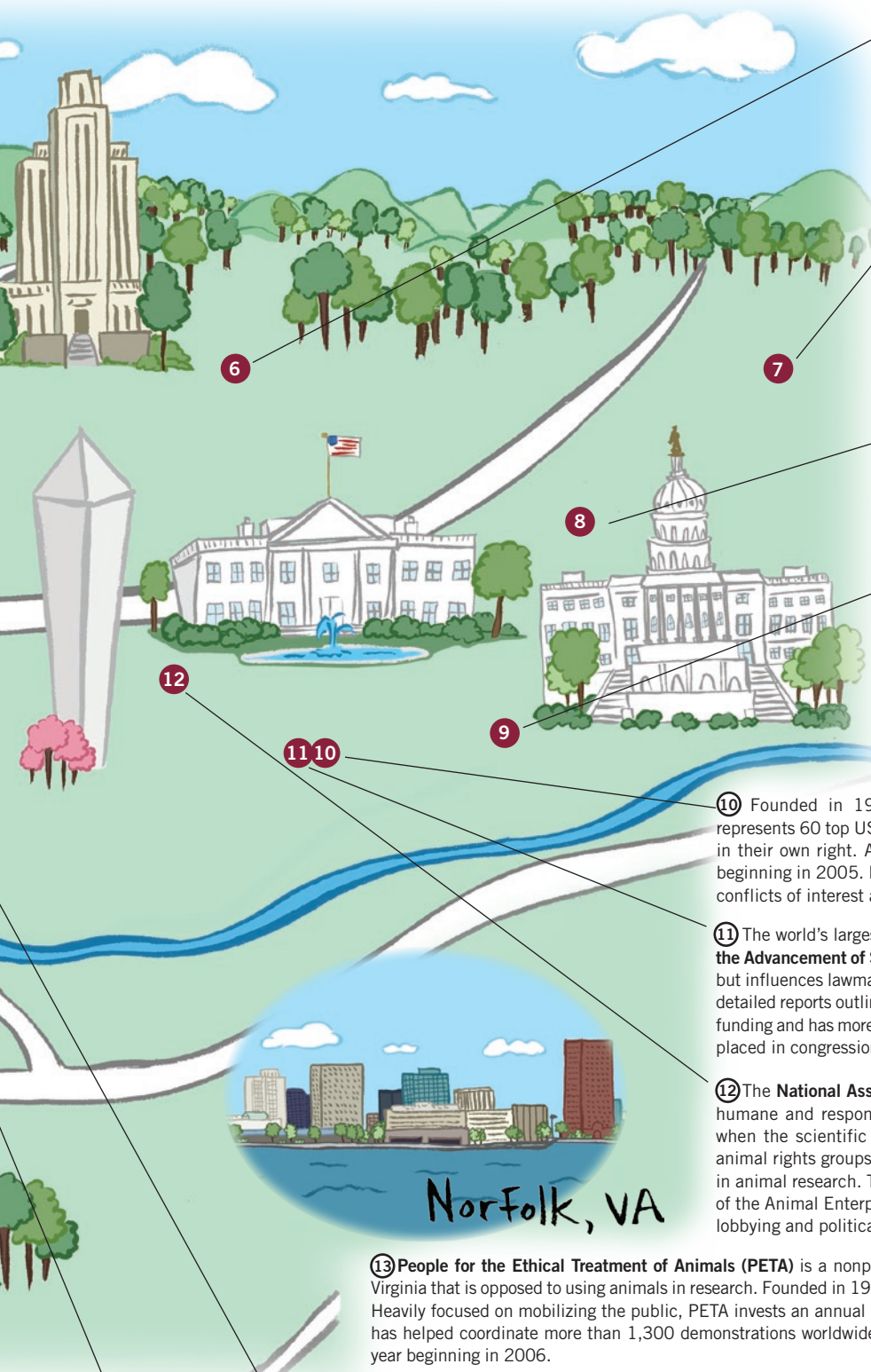
② The **Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research** focuses exclusively on NIH funding. When the organization was founded in 1982, the NIH's annual budget was almost \$4 billion; today it is close to \$30 billion. The coalition does not lobby but does serve as a central organizing body and information exchange for some 300 disparate organizations with stakes in NIH funding.

③ Founded about a decade after the Civil War, the **Association of American Medical Colleges** (AAMC) now advocates on behalf of 129 US medical schools and 400 teaching hospitals and health systems. AAMC maintains close communication with its members, alerting them when key legislation is on the table. Congressional representatives tend to listen to AAMC medical school deans and hospital CEOs from their home states. In 2007, AAMC's lobbying-related expenses totaled approximately \$540,000.

④ Since its genesis in 1989, **Research!America** has primarily focused on getting robust funding for medical and health research and boosting public support for such projects. Its opinion polls have raised public awareness by showing, for example, that most people in the US favor the use of embryonic stem cells in medical research. In 2007, Research!America spent more than \$140,000 on lobbying.

⑤ A Christian nonprofit created in 1977, **Focus on the Family** opposes human cloning and embryonic stem cell research but favors research with stem cells from other sources, including umbilical cord blood. Focus on the Family devoted more than \$700,000 toward lobbying in the tax year beginning in 2005. The group's political arm, Focus on the Family Action, reported spending approximately \$3.9 million on public policy awareness efforts in its 2007 annual financial report.





⑥ The **Coalition for Life Sciences** is an alliance of six organizations determined to boost basic biological research and its translation into medicine. Since its inception in 1989, the coalition has sought to engage the research community in the political process, facilitating face-to-face meetings between scientists and their representatives and bringing experts to Capitol Hill to give talks on hot topics such as avian flu.

⑦ The **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** (USCCB) regularly speaks out in opposition to embryonic stem cell research. A USCCB print ad appearing at both the Democratic and the Republican Conventions asserted that induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS cells), created from various body tissues, are "virtually identical" to embryonic stem cells.

⑧ Established in 1983, the **Family Research Council** (FRC) is a Christian nonprofit that opposes human cloning and embryonic stem cell research but supports alternative approaches with adult stem cells. FRC spent nearly \$340,000 on lobbying during the tax year beginning in 2006.

⑨ During the first half of 2008, **Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America** (PhRMA) spent \$8.6 million on lobbying-related activities, and PhRMA represents just a fraction of the drug industry lobby. An analysis by the Center for Public Integrity found that the pharmaceutical industry collectively poured nearly \$170 million into lobbying in 2007. Amgen alone spent \$16 million lobbying that year. PhRMA was founded in 1958 as the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association.

⑩ Founded in 1900, the **Association of American Universities** (AAU) represents 60 top US research universities, many of which lobby and advocate in their own right. AAU's lobbying bill was nearly \$90,000 for the tax year beginning in 2005. Pivotal issues for the association include federal funding, conflicts of interest and scientific openness.

⑪ The world's largest general scientific society, the **American Association for the Advancement of Science** (AAAS), was set up in 1848. AAAS does not lobby but influences lawmakers through less direct channels. The organization issues detailed reports outlining how much of the federal budget is devoted to research funding and has more than 150 science-savvy AAAS fellows who are strategically placed in congressional and executive offices in the US government.

⑫ The **National Association for Biomedical Research** (NABR) advocates the humane and responsible use of animals in research. Established in 1979 when the scientific community was coming under increased scrutiny from animal rights groups, NABR now represents around 300 institutions involved in animal research. The association was instrumental in securing the passage of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act. NABR spent more than \$400,000 on lobbying and political expenses for the tax year beginning in 2006.

⑬ **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals** (PETA) is a nonprofit international organization headquartered in Norfolk, Virginia that is opposed to using animals in research. Founded in 1980, PETA now boasts two million members and supporters. Heavily focused on mobilizing the public, PETA invests an annual \$6.5 million on international grassroots campaigning and has helped coordinate more than 1,300 demonstrations worldwide. PETA spent more than \$15,000 on lobbying in the tax year beginning in 2006.

⑭ Established in 1993 through a merger of the Association of Biotechnology Companies and the Industrial Biotechnology Association, the **Biotechnology Industry Organization** (BIO) is now the world's largest biotechnology group. According to government records, BIO spent nearly \$4 million on lobbying-related activities in the first half of 2008 alone. BIO wants Congress to boost funding for the US Food and Drug Administration to streamline the drug-review process and get new products to the market faster.

⑮ The **Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research** (CAMR) is "dedicated to being a national, collective voice on Capitol Hill and in the media for those who believe that embryonic stem cell research holds the key to better treatments and cures." Created in 2001, CAMR played a key part in getting Congress to pass the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, twice vetoed by President Bush. Last year, CAMR's lobbying tab amounted to above \$60,000.

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