HOW TO FIND OUT IF YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS IS HOSTING A TOWN HALL MEETING

- Check your member of Congress’ website, Facebook page or Twitter feed to find out the date and location of future meetings. Go to www.house.gov and enter your zip code to be directed to the appropriate website.

- If no information is listed on the website, call the member of Congress’ local office in your town/state. The phone number should be listed on his/her website.

- You can also check your local newspaper for announcements about upcoming town hall meetings, “office hours” or special events for constituents. Town hall meetings are often not announced very far in advance and additional events are sometimes added to the schedule at the last minute.

- Note any instructions about registering for the meeting or sending an RSVP and follow them carefully.

- Be prepared to provide your name, address and phone number which will be used to verify that you are a constituent.

PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

- Visit your member of Congress’ website, Facebook page or Twitter feed and read their latest press releases, speeches, newsletters, and/or tweets to find out how they’ve voted recently and which issues they are currently following.

- Write down 1 or 2 brief questions that you would like to ask your member of Congress. Make sure they are focused on a specific subject (like funding for NIH) or piece of legislation (HR 1). Do not include long introductory statements in your questions. Just state your name and the town where you live.

- Practice asking your question(s) until you can ask it/them in 25 seconds or less.

- Get directions to the meeting and research nearby parking and/or public transportation options.

DAY OF THE MEETING

- Arrive a few minutes early and make sure you have your questions ready.

- Sign-in if asked to do so by the Congressperson’s staff. Introduce yourself to the staff and offer your business card or other contact information.

- Ask if you need to sign-up in advance to ask a question.

- Sit in the front of the audience. If microphones are set up in the aisle, sit as close to the aisle as possible so you can quickly get to the microphone when it is time to ask questions.

- Turn off your cell phone, PDA, etc.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Do you believe the federal government should fund medical research?
- Do you think funding for medical research should be a priority even as we cut federal spending?
- Would you support increasing funding for medical research if we could cut other areas of federal spending?

TALKING POINTS ABOUT FEDERAL FUNDING FOR RESEARCH

- Share information about the public health relevance of your research (in very simple terms) and explain how federal funding for research is/was important to your career.
- Discuss how research advances have personally benefitted you or a family member/relative/friend.
- Mention the importance of biomedical research funding in your state (this information can be found in the FASEB state slide sets).
- Provide information about fiscal year 2010 funding to your state and congressional district. This is available at: http://report.nih.gov/award/trends/State_Congressional/StateOverview.cfm.
- Explain how reducing funding for medical research will terminate important scientific studies, halt graduate training, and discourage young scientists who are the key to our future.
- Offer examples of what will happen to you and your colleagues if funding for medical research is cut (e.g. lab staff will lose jobs, money will not be available for new grants, etc.)

FACTS ABOUT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

- More than 83 percent of NIH research funding is awarded to more than 3,000 universities, medical schools, teaching hospitals, and other research institutions, located in every state. These are funded through almost 50,000 competitive, peer-reviewed grants and contracts to more than 350,000 researchers.
- NIH-supported research has led to improved techniques to prevent heart attacks and helped develop highly effective drugs to lower cholesterol, control high blood pressure, and break up artery-clogging blood clots.
- Over the past 15 years, cancer death rates have dropped 11.4 percent among women and 19.2 percent among men, which translates into 650,000 lives saved. Today, basic research in cancer biology is moving treatment toward more effective, targeted, and less toxic therapies tailored to the genetic profile of each patient – and each patient’s cancer.
- NIH funding forms one of the key foundations for long-term U.S. global competitiveness in industries like biotechnology, medical device manufacturing and pharmaceutical development.
- Sustained increases are a critical investment in the training of America’s next generation of scientists, preparing them to make tomorrow’s health discoveries and ensure our country’s continued scientific leadership.
- NIH funds “enabling science” that explores and identifies discoveries at a point earlier than businesses can afford to invest, stoking and sustaining the pipeline of new drugs, diagnostic tests, and medical devices.