November 26, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Boehner, Senator Reid, Representative Pelosi, and Senator McConnell,

On behalf of the nearly 42,000 members of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN), I urge Congress and the White House to reach an agreement to avoid sequestration and its devastating impact on research at the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation. Failure to act will have severe consequences for human health and well-being, as well as the nation’s near-term and long-term economic growth. The threatened sequestration cuts would exponentially compound the trend of reduced U.S. investment in biomedical research, and jeopardize years of work already in the pipeline.

Research is a major force for improved health and medical treatments, and also an economic driver in the United States. In FY 2010 alone, NIH investments created 487,900 jobs and produced more than $68 billion in new economic activity—helping 16 states see job growth of 10,000 jobs or more at a time when unemployment was otherwise rising. Biomedical research investments are far-reaching, with the distribution of over 83 percent of NIH funding going to more than 3,000 institutions in communities in every state. Moreover, basic research investments expand U.S. competitiveness as a global research leader and help foster private enterprises in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical devices industries, among others.

SfN is the world's largest organization of scientists and physicians who study the brain and nervous system. Neuroscience is on the cusp of revolutionary advances that will greatly benefit all Americans, including the more than 100 million Americans who live with neurological and psychiatric diseases, as well as their families. Recent advances in neuroimaging and computational tools are allowing scientists to look more closely into the inner workings of the human brain than ever before. Greater understanding of genes, proteins, and the connections between brain cells is transforming our knowledge of the relationships between different brain disorders and driving new avenues for treatment.
Biomedical research has traditionally enjoyed broad bipartisan support precisely because of its vital role in health and economic growth. Rather than allowing indiscriminate cuts, we should be increasing funding for scientific research. Today, I urge Congress and the White House to work together to avoid sequestration cuts and their severe, long-term consequences. SfN then looks forward to working in the new Congress to make research funding a top priority for the nation.

Sincerely,

Larry Swanson, PhD
President, Society for Neuroscience

University Professor and Appleman Professor of Biological Sciences, Neurology, and Psychology
University of Southern California