

Government & Public Affairs Committee Annual Report

September 2006

Part 1 — Charter Updates

Below are the responsibilities of the Government & Public Affairs Committee as defined in the approved charter. Please provide updates on activities since the last annual meeting in green.

Monitor

- Track US federal legislation affecting neuroscience.
 - Tracking the federal budget process from the February release of President Bush's FY 2007 budget to the current Appropriations process for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee, which funds NIH
 - Tracking the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA), which would allow federal investigators greater flexibility in capturing and penalizing those individuals who harass and terrorize those who conduct animal research, or the third parties associated with them
 - Tracked stem cell legislation HR 810 as it made it's way through both the House and Senate only to be vetoed by President Bush this spring
- Monitor the governmental funding and regulatory environment regarding neuroscience in Canada and Mexico.
 - Provided funding to the Canadian Association for Neuroscience to produce a booklet that outlines the economic benefit and impact of neuroscience research called "The Case for Canada's Increased Investment in Neuroscience Research", released on March 15, 2006
 - Working with the Mexican Representative to the GPA Committee to formulate two advocacy proposals that would benefit Mexican neuroscientists and Mexican students learning about the brain
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the various coalitions in which the Society participates.
 - CMR: GPA Incoming Chair John Morrison is familiar with CMR's activities, as they are working with SfN to facilitate the event hosted in conjunction with the Center for Health Transformation (CHT). We also report on CMR activities twice a year, including Hill visits.
 - JSC: GPA Representatives Steve Hyman and Gerald Fischbach are the best monitors of Board-level activities, along with SfN Executive Director Marty Saggese and Steve Heinemann. We also report on JSC activities twice a year, including Hill Visit days and luncheon briefings on timely scientific topics.
 - ABC: GPA Chair Mahlon DeLong sits on the ABC Board and is the Chair of the ABC Advocacy Committee. He is heavily involved in a working group devoted to access to care issues, and monitors the other working group dealing with data collecting on incidence and prevalence,

etc of neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Advise

- Serve as a source of information to Council on legislative or policy changes that could affect the conduct of neuroscience research in North America, including animal research, stem cell research, evolution, and social issues.
 - Any relevant articles on animal research, stem cell research, evolution, etc. are sent to Council as informational information, as they arise.
 - GPA Committee worked with a number of evolutionary biologists from Harvard University to re-write and update SfN's Statement on Teaching Evolution, which was approved at the end of August
 - Incoming GPA Committee Chair John Morrison and former Public Information Committee Chair Jeff Rothstein worked together to update the SfN Statement on Stem Cell Research
- Propose actions to Council that broaden and strengthen the coalition supporting biomedical research both inside and beyond the scientific community.
 - GPA Committee Incoming Chair John Morrison was integral to planning the SfN and Center for Health Transformation event scheduled for October 16, involving Newt Gingrich and business leaders
- Recommend strategic partnerships with a broad array of organizations and individuals that support biomedical research.
 - GPA Committee Incoming Chair John Morrison was integral to planning the SfN and Center for Health Transformation event scheduled for October 16, involving Newt Gingrich and business leaders in the health, biotechnology and instrumentation companies, as well as some of our regular coalition colleagues
- Recommend to Council advocacy collaborations with Canadian and Mexican partner organizations.
 - GPA continues its endorsement of Canadian Association of Neuroscience's advocacy activities, particularly after the release of "The Case for Canada's Increased Investment in Neuroscience Research"
 - GPA Committee heard Mexican Representative Francisco Fernandez de Miguel's proposals for two advocacy activities for 2006-2007
- Recommend strategies to support increased federal funding for NIH, NSF, and other federally funded research agencies.
 - GPA Committee communicates with SfN lobbyists at least once a year to determine best strategies and bring them before Council. One such example of this is the SfN and Center for Health Transformation event proposal which was raised and approved at fall 2005 Council.

Represent

- Provide committee representation to the board of the Joint Steering Committee for Public Policy (JSC), maximizing SfN's input in policy discussions and JSC's overarching plans to increase biomedical research funding.
 - GPA Representatives Steve Hyman and Gerald Fischbach are the best monitors of Board-level activities, along with SfN Executive Director

Marty Saggese and Steve Heinemann.

- Participate in the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding to propose appropriations for NIH and the Coalition for Health Funding.
 - GPA committee is apprised of Ad Hoc's activities by staff and determines SfN's best course of action, often dovetailing with Ad Hoc's funding stance
- The chair shall be included among the Society's representatives to the American Brain Coalition Board when a slot becomes available.
 - GPA Chair Mahlon DeLong sits on the ABC Board and is the Chair of the ABC Advocacy Committee and is in his second year of a three-year term.

Manage Activities

- Organize the Public Advocacy Forum each year at the annual meeting.
 - This year's topic, "Becoming Media Savvy: The Inside Scoop", was organized by GPA Committee leadership in conjunction with the newly-formed Public Education and Communications Committee.
- Work for appropriations for federal agencies supporting neuroscience research.
 - Steve Heinemann presented oral testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies on March 29, 2006, to advocate for increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY 2007.
- Organize advocacy training for neuroscientists at the local level on how to effectively educate the public and advocate to policymakers on behalf of neuroscience.
 - GPA was supportive of the advocacy training for neuroscientists and was aware of the multiple mentions of this SfN member benefit in *Neuroscience Nexus* and *Neuroscience Quarterly* in two of Steve Heinemann's columns
- Notify US members when they should contact their Congressional representatives on key issues.
 - Legislative Alerts were sent out on the following topics on the following dates and elicited the corresponding response rates:

3/14/06: Vote YES on the Specter-Harkin Amendment to the Senate Budget Resolution - 1,999 messages sent

3/27/06: Vote YES on the DeLauro Amendment to the Budget Resolution in Committee - 317 messages sent

4/6/06: Vote NO on the House Budget Committee-passed Budget Resoltuion - Call alert; number of callers unknown

7/14/06: Vote YES on the Senate Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act - 748 messages sent

8/25/06: Urge your legislators to co-sponsor the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act - 1,662 messages sent

Other: Compose your own message - 1,178 messages sent

Total = 5,904 messages sent

- Recruit strategic partners from big pharma, the biotech community, and additional members of the science and voluntary health communities, with a plan to put research to work for better health and quality of life.
 - SfN joined Center for Health Transformation in order to host an event with pharmaceutical and biotech communities to hold an off-the-record discussion about new strategies to advocate on behalf of science funding
 - Center for Health Transformation also agreed, per our membership, to issue a white paper that frames a new argument for improving funding for science funding because pharma and biotech discoveries rely on such funding to improve the health and quality of life for Americans
- Continue a leadership role in a broad array of organizations to bring together patient and professional groups in support of a shared agenda of expanding research.
 - SfN continues to play key roles in CMR, JSC, Ad Hoc, ABC, and continues workings closely with others like Research!America and FASEB
- Reach out to industry leaders who exert influence in Washington, DC, based on a shared agenda in support of the economic importance of research in the US and the global economy.
 - SfN joined Center for Health Transformation in order to host an event with pharmaceutical and biotech communities to hold an off-the-record discussion about new strategies to advocate on behalf of science funding
- Form strategic relationships with key political leaders who could and will help advance the cause of biomedical research.
 - Through joining Center for Health Transformation, SfN leaders including Steve Heinemann, David Van Essen, and John Morrison, met with CHT chairman former House Speaker Newt Gingrich in August, along with hosting an event with business leaders on October 16, and agreeing to issue a white paper reframing arguments for science funding
 - Thanks to a long-time cultivated relationship with Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) he made a statement, during Brain Awareness Week, about the importance of brain research, recognizing SfN, and addressing mental health parity

Generate Policy Recommendations

- Generate and approve public position statements and legislative alerts on behalf of SfN about legislative or policy changes that affect the conduct of neuroscience for Council review.
 - GPA was involved in rewriting SfN position statement on stem cell research and evolution, and issues legislative alerts on science funding and animal rights terrorism
 - NIH Reauthorization—GPA committee worked hard to formulate a

second letter to House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) regarding SfN's concerns on a bill to reauthorize the NIH. The bill contained several unfavorable portions relating to funding caps for the agency which would have been further limited by a 'common fund' that would funnel money to special programs deemed appropriate by the NIH director and an advisory committee

Coordinate and Communicate

- Ensure that relevant policy related information is communicated to the SfN membership.
 - Science funding and science advocacy played a prominent role in Steve Heinemann's last two presidential columns, stating the facts and concerns about science funding along with urging SfN members to do visits in the policymakers' home districts, take advantage of the advocacy training that SfN offers, etc.
 -
- Coordinate activities with the other committees in the Public Outreach Cluster, which also includes the Public Education and Communication Committee and the Committee on Animals in Research. The chair will serve as the committee's representative on the cluster steering committee.
 - GPA worked with the Public Education and Communications Committee to organize the Public Advocacy Forum.
 - GPA chair and incoming chair participated in an October 5 conference call of the Public Outreach Cluster, to insure smooth functioning of the newly formed Cluster and its activities

Part 2 — Other Updates

Please provide updates on any other activities of the committee that are not already covered in the charter.

Drs. Heinemann, Van Essen, Morrison, and SfN staff, attending a meeting with Newt Gingrich on July 28th, to discuss the October 16th event, as well as strategies for increasing SfN outreach on NIH funding issues. All were very pleased with the meeting, and Speaker Gingrich enjoyed it as well.

Part 3 — Questions for Cluster Steering Committee / Council

Use the space below propose questions for discussion by the Cluster Steering Committee (if appropriate) and/or Council.

Questions

Part 4 — Other Comments
Use the space below for any other comments.

Comments here.