

Government & Public Affairs Committee Annual Report

November 2007

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.
 - Science funding – Congress finished FY 2007 appropriations on February 15, 2007, by passing a year-long continuing resolution that held most federal spending at the FY 2006 levels. However, NIH saw a 2.6 percent increase, with NSF receiving a 6.0 percent boost in the resolution.
 - The FY 2008 Labor-HHS bill (which funds NIH) is still before Congress, and the President has stated he will veto the bill as it exceeds his spending request. Hence, it is unknown when the bill will eventually pass, but as in previous years, it may be rolled into an omnibus appropriations bill. NIH would receive a 2.6 percent increase from the Senate, and a 1.9 percent increase from the House.
 - The Commerce-Justice-Science bill, which funds NSF, has passed both chambers, and conferees will meet to hammer out the differences. NSF receives a 10 percent increase in the House bill, and 10.8 percent in the Senate version. This bill also faces a possible veto.
 - In late September, Congress passed a continuing resolution to fund all government agencies and programs at FY 2007 levels through November 16, 2007. This allows Congress additional time to pass individual bills without a federal government shutdown.
 - Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act – The bill (S. 5, H.R. 3) was vetoed by the President, and did not receive the necessary number of votes in the House to override. The Senate may take up a veto vote this year, but is not expected to override. An amendment sponsored by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) in the Senate version of the FY 2008 NIH appropriations bill would allow federally-funded research on embryonic stem cell lines created prior to June 15, 2007, but the language is expected to be removed during conference.
 - Mental health parity – The Senate on September 18 passed the Paul Wellstone Mental Health Equity and Addiction Act of 2007 (H.R. 1424, S. 558). The bill has passed two House committees and awaits floor action. If passed and signed into law, it would require most insurance plans to provide mental health benefits on par with standard medical and surgical benefits.
 - NIH Reauthorization – Signed into law January 15, 2007.

- Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act –Signed into law December 3, 2006.
- Monitor the governmental funding and regulatory environment regarding neuroscience in Canada and Mexico.
 - A collaboration agreement was signed in 2007 between the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) and the Mexican Society for Physiological Sciences (SMCF).
 - As of mid-October, 13 of the Brain Research Success Stories have been translated into Spanish. Two others are to be released next week. Five of the television capsules have also been reviewed by national scientists, to correct possible translation errors. The rest are in the review process.
 - Two of the BRSS, alcoholism and memory loss, have been adapted for Mexican population, including statistics and national impact, by Drs. Milagros Mendez and Clorinda Arias.
 - During the last Ricardo Miledi Course, in Queretaro (November 2006) Dr. F. De-Miguel had a three-hour session with 15 students to discuss the importance of advocacy and public education.
 - During the 50th anniversary of SMCF, Professors Antonio Arias (Elect President of SMCF) and De Miguel organized a Symposium entitled Science Advocacy and Education. The speakers were Dr. F. De-Miguel, Professor Steve Heinemann (Past President of SfN), Prof. Gabriel Navar (Past President of the American Physiological Society) and Professor Rafael Rubio, from the University of San Luis Potosí, Mexico. The symposium focused on why it is important to participate in science advocacy and education in Mexico and in the rest of the world. Each speaker gave an overview of his own experience on science and advocacy and of the impact on science in the years to come.
 - Valerie Verge will present an update on Canadian activities during the GPA Fall 2007 meeting.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the various coalitions in which the Society participates.
 - Campaign for Medical Research (CMR) – SfN participates in weekly phone calls organized by CMR on legislative and media activity related to biomedical research funding. SfN staff attended a number of Capitol Hill meetings scheduled by CMR.
 - Joint Steering Committee for Public Policy (JSC) – SfN members and staff participated in two Congressional visit days organized by JSC in March and September. In total, more than 60 scientists visited their Members of Congress.
 - American Brain Coalition (ABC) – ABC issued numerous alerts to its members in 2007 on mental health parity, stem cells, and NIH funding. Recently, an ABC alert on appropriations resulted in 435 contacts made with Congress. ABC is holding a membership and board meeting in San Diego. While SfN continues its role as a founding member and primary contributor to ABC, the daily running of the coalition is shifting from SfN to the American Academy of Neurology's Washington office. Katie Sale and Allison Kupferman, both former SfN staff, are managing the

coalition and its government relations through the end of 2007.

- Coalition for the National Science Foundation (CNSF) - In 2007, CNSF held 10 meetings at which Congressional staff and federal officials spoke about current and future NSF funding, and related issues. CNSF held its annual exhibition in June, which was attended by nearly 400 Congressional staff and over 20 Members of Congress. CNSF's annual NSF appropriations Capitol Hill Day in September drew over 50 NSF-funded scientists from a wide range of disciplines, including one SfN member.
- Evolution Coalition - The group recently completed analysis of a survey on Americans' attitudes toward evolution and will begin planning a major public advocacy campaign for 2009. Smaller state-level campaigns are planned for states renewing education standards where the teaching of evolution is threatened.

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.
- Propose actions to Council that broaden and strengthen the coalition supporting biomedical research both inside and beyond the scientific community.
 - At its Fall 2007 meetings, GPA will consider a proposal that SfN join the House Research and Development Caucus and a proposal to participate in the Science, Engineering, and Technology Congressional Visits Day. Both initiatives will provide SfN an opportunity to increase visibility on Capitol Hill on research and science issues.
- Recommend strategic partnerships with a broad array of organizations and individuals that support biomedical research.
 - SfN continued its membership in Newt Gingrich's Center for Health Transformation in 2007. Mr. Gingrich is making a special presentation at the 2007 Annual Meeting on biomedical research advocacy.
 - In March 2007, SfN joined the Kansas Coalition for Lifesaving Cures, a group dedicated to preventing a ban on stem cell research in Kansas. As a member of a sister organization in Missouri in 2006, SfN helped defeat a ballot initiative that would have banned most stem cell research in that state.
 - At their Fall 2007 meeting, GPA will consider a proposal to join the Science, Engineering, and Technology Congressional Visits Day efforts, as well as the Congressional R&D Caucus. Both offer opportunities for SfN to advance messages supportive of biomedical research funding to Capitol Hill staff while partnering with other science and technology organizations.
- Recommend to Council advocacy collaborations with Canadian and Mexican partner organizations.

- See Mexico Advocacy update above. Drs. de Miguel and Verge will present updates at the Fall 2007 meeting.
- Recommend strategies to support increased federal funding for NIH, NSF, and other federally funded research agencies.
 - The GPA Committee is being briefed by SfN staff and lobbyist Nick Cavarocchi at its Fall meeting and receives information throughout the year from SfN staff and lobbyists.

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 to the JSC Board are Steve Hyman and Gerald Fischbach. The SfN President and Executive Director are also involved in Board meetings and activities.
- Participate in the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding to propose appropriations for NIH and the Coalition for Health Funding.
 - GPA staff stay apprised of Ad Hoc's positions, and in 2007, chose to adopt the group's recommendation of a 6.7 percent increase for NIH into SfN's advocacy message.
 - SfN signed October letters drafted by the Ad Hoc Group and CMR, urging Congress to include the Senate-recommended level of \$29.89 billion (a 2.6 percent increase) for NIH in the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.
- The chair shall be included among the Society's representatives to the American Brain Coalition Board when a slot becomes available.
 - Former GPA Chair Mahlon DeLong sits on the ABC Board and is Chair of the ABC Advocacy Committee.

Manage Activities

- Organize the Public Advocacy Forum each year at the annual meeting.
 - The 2007 Public Advocacy Forum features former Intel CEO Andy Grove discussing how lessons from systems engineering and the high-tech revolution can inform a new approach to biomedical research and expand today's biotech revolution. He also is addressing the potential for improving the effectiveness of the research process by changing the way it is funded, managed, and conducted.
- Work for appropriations for federal agencies supporting neuroscience research.
 - SfN President David Van Essen submitted written testimony to both the U.S. House and Senate appropriations subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, urging increased government funding for research. The Labor-HHS-Education subcommittees are responsible for setting NIH funding levels. His testimony was submitted to the House on March 30 and to the Senate on April 17 for inclusion in the Congressional Record.
- Organize advocacy training for neuroscientists at the local level on how to

effectively educate the public and advocate to policymakers on behalf of neuroscience.

- SfN staff prepared materials on enhancing chapter participation in advocacy efforts for inclusion in the Chapter Workshop packet. Staff and Nick Cavarocchi are attending the workshop in San Diego to encourage SfN chapters' increased involvement in federal, state, and local advocacy.
- Notify US members when they should contact their Congressional representatives on key issues.
 - The following legislative alerts were sent in 2007:
 - 01/05/07 – Add funds to the CR for NIH – 3106 messages
 - 01/09/07 – Support stem cell research legislation – 430 messages
 - 01/11/07 – Support basic research by funding NSF – 792 messages
 - 01/12/07 – Support increased funding for NIH – 533 messages
 - 04/09/07 – Urge your Senators to support stem cell research legislation – Senate – 320 messages
 - 05/08/07 – Support additional funding for NIH and NSF – 2009 messages
 - 05/16/07 – Support NIH funding – 313 messages
 - 06/04/07 – Support stem cell legislation – House – 264 messages
 - 06/13/07 – Support NIH funding – 4822 messages (static alert, generic messages, left online for 12 weeks)
 - 08/02/07 – Thanks for your support of NSF – House – 274 messages
 - 08/14/07 – Support NSF funding – Senate – 73 messages
 - 10/02/07 – Urge your Representative to sign NIH letter – 605 messages
 - Total: 13,541 messages (more than twice the 2006 total)**
- 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.
 - Staff is revamping and updating the Washington Update, a quarterly newsletter reaching out to the corporate science community. It is scheduled to be delivered by e-mail to about 500 corporations by the end of October.
- 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, ABC, and JSC, while working closely with Ad Hoc, Research!America, and NABR.
- 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.
 - Through SfN's involvement with the Center for Health Transformation, Newt Gingrich and Steve Burrill co-authored an op-ed on the benefits of NIH research, published in the June 24 issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The piece was based on a white paper issued by CHT in June.
- Form strategic relationships with key political leaders to advance the cause of biomedical research.

- Representative Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) were featured in a new SfN video, *Battling Brain Disorders: Voices from Public Figures*. They discussed their struggles with brain disorders and diseases, and a senior SfN member discussed the state of research. The videos are available online:
<http://www.sfn.org/BattlingBrainDisorders>.

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.
 - See above list of legislative alerts. No SfN public position statements were generated.

Coordinate and Communicate

- Ensure that relevant policy related information is communicated to the SfN membership.
 - SfN is supporting an effort by Research!America called *Your Congress, Your Health*, an initiative designed to educate the American public about the positions and votes made by their policymakers in the areas of health, science, and medicine. This partnership was announced in *Neuroscience Nexus* and in alerts to the ABC membership. *Your Congress, Your Health* also was publicized in *Parade* magazine in summer 2007.
<http://www.yourcongressyourhealth.org>.
 - Research!America has announced a similar project, *Your Candidates, Your Health*, an initiative to let voters know where presidential candidates stand on these issues: <http://www.yourcandidatesyourhealth.org>.
 - Legislative articles appeared in all 2007 issues of *Neuroscience Quarterly*, including articles on stem cell legislation, and NSF and NIH funding.
- 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.
 - Joint Capitol Hill visits with CAR and GPA are planned for Spring 2008.

Part 2 — Other Updates

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

Part 3 — Questions for Cluster Steering Committee / Council
Use the space below to 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.