

Government & Public Affairs Committee Annual Report November 2008

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 - On Dec. 26 2007, President Bush signed a \$555 billion omnibus appropriations bill that includes FY2008 funding for most federal agencies and programs. Minimal increases for scientific programs relative to FY2007 are provided. NIH received \$28.942 billion, a \$133 million (0.46 percent) increase above last year. This amount is well below the 3.1 percent increase included in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill vetoed by the President on Nov. 13 2007. The omnibus bill provides \$6.034 billion for NSF, for a 1.97 percent increase above last year but below the 10 percent increases included in the original House and Senate bills.
 - On June 30, 2008, the President signed into law the FY2008 supplemental appropriations bill that provides an additional \$150 million for NIH and \$62.5 million for NSF.
 - The House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee met on June 19, 2008 and provided \$30.1 billion for NIH in FY2009, a \$1.2 billion or 4.1 percent increase over last year's level. However, House Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-WI) abruptly adjourned the committee meeting on June 26 before votes were cast on the LHHS bill. On the Senate side, the LHHS Appropriations Committee on June 26 approved its version of the LHHS bill, giving NIH a \$1.025 billion (3.5 percent) increase over the FY2008 level.
 - The House Appropriations Committee approved the FY2009 Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) appropriations bill on June 25 and set the FY2009 spending level for NSF at \$6.854 billion, a 14 percent increase over FY2008 and the same level as the President's request. On June 19, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the CJS bill that also includes \$6.854 billion for NSF.
 - President Bush signed on September 30 a continuing resolution (CR) to maintain current funding levels for most federal programs through March 6, 2009. With the federal fiscal year 2008 ending on Sept. 30, the action was needed to avoid a government shutdown, as the U.S. Congress still had not passed bills to fund most government programs. The CR funds most federal programs, including NIH and NSF, at their FY2008 levels at

- least until Congress returns next year.
- Mental Health Parity – Mental health parity legislation was included in the \$700 billion financial bailout bill that was signed into law on October 3. The provision requires that insurers who cover mental health services provide them at the same level as traditional medical benefits.
 - Monitor the governmental funding and regulatory environment regarding neuroscience in Canada and Mexico.
 - Neuroscience Canada has been active in advocacy and will present a proposal during the Fall 2008 GPA meeting. Once approved, it will be presented to Council.
 - As part of its agreement with SfN, our Mexican counterparts translated all Brain Research Success Stories into Spanish and are working on adapting them for Mexican audiences.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the various coalitions in which the Society participates.
 - American Brain Coalition (ABC) – ABC issued numerous alerts to its members in 2008 on mental health parity and NIH funding. ABC is holding a membership and board meeting in Washington, DC during Neuroscience 2008.
 - The Campaign for Medical Research (CMR) – no longer exists.
 - Coalition for Life Sciences – SfN members and staff participated in two Congressional visit days organized by CLS. Issues included NIH and NSF funding.
 - Coalition for the National Science Foundation (CNSF) – CNSF held regular meetings at which Congressional staff and federal officials spoke about current and future NSF funding and related issues. SfN signed a CNSF letter asking appropriators in Congress to include \$6.854 billion in the CR for NSF, the same amount the House and Senate Appropriations Committees included in their draft bills.
 - Evolution Coalition – The group is drafting a joint unified agreement on the teaching of science in response to recent anti-evolution efforts in various states.

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.
 - Relevant articles are provided to Council as information items.
- Propose actions to Council that broaden and strengthen the coalition supporting biomedical research both inside and beyond the scientific community.
 - The Campaign for Medical Research dissolved in June 2008. SfN staff participated in meetings led by FASEB and American Heart Association and involving other leading organizations. Participants are currently collaborating on developing a framework for the next NIH advocacy coalition.
- Recommend strategic partnerships with a broad array of organizations and

individuals that support biomedical research.

- SfN's 2008 membership in Newt Gingrich's Center for Health Transformation will expire in March 2009. GPA will examine next steps, including participating at a lower level. Gingrich spoke on the importance of scientists engaging in advocacy during his special presentation at the 2007 Annual Meeting.
- A SfN member participated in the Science, Engineering, and Technology Congressional Visits Day in March. SfN staff assisted with the event by developing advocacy materials on research funding.
- Recommend to Council advocacy collaborations with Canadian and Mexican partner organizations.
 - See advocacy update above. Further updates will be given at the Fall 2008 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 and CRD staff at its Fall 2008 meeting and receives information throughout the year from SfN staff and legislative advisors. SfN staff produces *Eye on Washington*, a weekly legislative update, which is e-mailed to members of the GPA Committee.

Represent

- Provide committee representation to the board of the Coalition for Life Sciences (CLS), maximizing SfN's input in policy discussions and CLS's overarching plans to increase biomedical research funding.
 - GPA representatives to the CLS Board are Steve Hyman, Gerald Fischbach, and Bob Horvitz. SfN attended CLS steering committee meetings this year. Howard Hughes Medical Institute joined the coalition, and CLS staff have identified other organizations to recruit.
- 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 2008, chose to support the group's recommendation of a 6.5 percent, or \$1.9 billion, increase to the NIH budget in FY2009.
 - SfN signed onto the CHF letter urging appropriators in Congress to provide the highest level for health programs included in the appropriations bills in the CR.
- 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 and current GPA member Nancy Wexler sit on the ABC Board.

Manage Activities

- Organize the Public Advocacy Forum each year at the annual meeting.
 - The 2008 Public Advocacy Forum – "The Elections: And the Winner is...Science?" focuses on the U.S. Presidential and Congressional

election results and the potential impact on science funding and policy. Katrina Kelner, Deputy Editor of Life Sciences for *Science*, will moderate the discussion. Participants include Harold Varmus, former NIH director; John Porter, Chair of the Research!America Board of Directors and former U.S. Representative; and Wendell Primus, Senior Policy Advisor to Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi.

- Work for appropriations for federal agencies supporting neuroscience research.
 - SfN President Eve Marder submitted testimony via e-mail to the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee in support of NIH on April 18. Written testimony was sent to the Senate Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee in support of NSF funding on April 18.
- 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 Chair John Morrison is speaking at the Chapters Workshop to encourage chapter leaders to look to SfN as a resource for local advocacy training. SfN and CRD staff will attend the workshop to highlight the importance of federal, state, and local advocacy. SfN staff is preparing a chapter leader who has participated in past advocacy events to have a booth at the Chapters Workshop.
- Notify US members when they should contact their Congressional representatives on key issues.
 - The following legislative alerts were sent in 2008:
 - 11/13/2007 – Override the President’s Veto of the NIH Funding Bill – 4225 messages
 - 11/16/2007 – Support NIH Funding – 160 messages
 - 03/10/2008 – Urge your Representative to sign the Markey letter Supporting NIH – 1155 messages
 - 03/14/2008 – Thank your Senators if They Supported Valuable Basic Research – 53 messages
 - 05/15/2008 – Support funding for NIH – 135 messages
 - 07/18/2008 – Support NIH Funding in the Second Supplemental – 1009 messages
 - Total: 6,737 messages**
- 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 produced the first edition of the *Washington Research Update*, a periodic newsletter aimed at engaging the biotech industry in biomedical research advocacy. The e-newsletter was sent on July 9 to 1,553 business leaders.
- 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 ABC and CLS, while working closely with Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research, 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.
 - SfN staff attended a meeting organized by Janet Lambert of Invitrogen to discuss a new NIH advocacy coalition that will include scientific, patient and industry organizations.
 - SfN staff spoke with Dave Moore of AAMC about an NIH/Johns Hopkins communications effort, for which they are seeking contributors.
 - SfN staff regularly participate in FASEB-led advocacy meetings that were initiated following the end of CMR.
- Form strategic relationships with key political leaders who could and will help advance the cause of biomedical research.
 - Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA) spoke to participants at the SfN Capitol Hill Day on April 22 at a breakfast in the Cannon House Office Building. Rep. Bilbray's staff secured the room, which provided a home-base between meetings, for SfN members and staff. While a visit by Rep. Bilbray to Dr. Nick Spitzer's lab at UCSD was cancelled last minute, his staff is interested in rescheduling.
 - David Borchelt, former CAR member, met with the district director John Konkus for Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL) at his University of Florida office, followed by a lab tour.
 - Following his participation in the 2008 SfN Capitol Hill Day, Dr. Ramesh Ragupathi of Drexel University, provided a lab tour to a district staffer for Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA).
 - Dr. David Linn of Grand Valley State University met with Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) in his Grand Rapids office on May 28.
 - SfN staff worked with Rep. Simpson (R-ID) to write a statement for the Congressional record supporting the work of NIH in the area of Alzheimer's disease, which was officially submitted and printed on July 29.

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.
 - GPA Committee approved revised Federal Funding Strategy section of the SfN Strategic Plan that more closely matches the new focus on increasing member engagement in advocacy.

Coordinate and Communicate

- Ensure that relevant policy related information is communicated to the SfN membership.

- A new advocacy network designed to keep members informed and encourage them to engage in advocacy activities was launched on July 9. SfN Advocacy Network members receive a monthly e-newsletter with the latest policy developments. An invitation e-mail was sent to 404 SfN members who had indicated an interest in becoming more involved in advocacy efforts. Additionally, the network was promoted on the Web site, in NQ, and in Nexus. The SfN Advocacy Network currently has 92 members.
- GPA staff includes legislative updates in Nexus and regularly updates the News and Announcements pages on the Web site.
- 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.
 - A Public Outreach Cluster meeting was held at the 2007 Annual Meeting. A meeting to discuss the year's activities and 2009 annual meeting events is scheduled for Nov. 19, just before the Council meeting. Incoming CAR and GPA chairs have been invited to attend.
 - A joint SfN Capitol Hill Day is being planned for GPA and CAR for April 2009.

Part 2 — Other Updates

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

- Incoming Chair Bruce McEwen has been invited to participate in the Fall Council meeting as part of the Public Outreach Cluster.
- SfN staff compile relevant articles and policy pieces in a weekly e-mail entitled Eye on Washington, which is distributed to the GPA committee and made available to all SfN staff.

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.

Part 4 — Other Comments

Use the space below for any other comments.