



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up

April 13, 2020

Each week, the Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up will feature hashtags and/or tweets (follow us at [@fundNIH](#)) suggested by members of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) advocacy community. We encourage all readers who are active on social media to use these messages, and we welcome suggestions from the community for future issues of the Weekly Round Up. Here is this week's featured tweet:

APS Science Policy [@SciPoIAPS](#) April 13

Inspired by the original scratch method used to deliver the smallpox vaccine, the potential [#COVID19](#) vaccine from Pitt scientists uses a microneedle array to deliver the treatment. [Learn more.](#)

House Appropriators Receive FY 2021 302(b) Allocations

As reported in [Bloomberg Government](#) on April 10 (subscription required), House appropriators have been given preliminary topline FY 2021 spending levels for all 12 spending bills. The preliminary spending levels, or 302(b) levels, have been assigned with adherence to the budget caps established in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2019, which provided a 0.5% increase in discretionary spending between FY 2020 to FY 2021.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers, including Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.) and Labor-HHS Ranking Member Tom Cole (R-Okla.) have expressed interest in exempting programs “that relate to the coronavirus response” from the FY 2021 budget caps. Rep. Cole highlighted NIH as a program that will need “a lot more [beyond] a one-and-done supplemental.”

Ad Hoc Sends Letter Urging Robust Allocation for FY21 Labor-HHS Spending Bill

The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research sent an [April 10 letter](#) to Appropriations Committee leadership urging Congress to “significantly boost the FY 2021 allocation for the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) spending bill to ensure the subcommittee is able to invest fully in NIH and the entire network of health agencies and programs that work together to improve the health of all Americans.” In addition, the letter shared support for the Congressional proposal to exempt key health programs from the FY 2021 budget caps.

FY 2021 Labor-HHS Outside Witness Testimony

The Senate Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee has posted instructions for submitting outside witness testimony for FY 2021. [According to the instructions](#), testimony

should be no longer than four pages and sent to the Subcommittee no later than close of business May 22.

Lawmakers Urge HHS to Remove Fetal Tissue Research Restrictions

Reps. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) led an [April 6 letter](#) with 10 additional signatories urging HHS Secretary Alex Azar to remove restrictions on NIH-funded human fetal tissue research and to “prioritize science during an unprecedented global health emergency.” The lawmakers argue that NIH is unable to explore all possible options to develop vaccines and therapeutics against COVID-19 with these restrictions.

This follows the April 1 introduction of the Protecting Cures Act of 2020 ([H.R. 6417](#)) that ensures all biomedical research tools — including fetal tissue — are available to develop treatments and vaccines against COVID-19. The bill was introduced by Reps. Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Mark Pocan (D-Wisc.) and seven original cosponsors.

HHS COVID-19 Awards Tracking

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has [developed a feature](#) to search all HHS COVID-19 grant and cooperative agreement awards on its Tracking Accountability in Government Grants System (TAGGS) website. This COVID-19 site provides data on awards made by all HHS awarding agencies with supplemental appropriations provided through the first three COVID-19 supplemental packages (Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020; Families First Coronavirus Response Act; and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security [CARES] Act).

The COVID-19 funding tracker includes a map detailing the amounts awarded by state, graphics detailing numbers and amounts of awards awarded by agency, and awards by program, and tables of exportable data.

HHS OIG Examines NIH Protection of Peer Review from Foreign Influence

HHS’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) [found](#) that the NIH has effectively protected peer review from undue foreign influences by identifying reviewers who attempt to steal ideas from grant applications and other actions. The [OIG report](#) released March 31 also said that the NIH is “in the early stages of addressing this threat systematically” and “could do more.”

Open Mike: Some Thoughts on Cybersecurity – Part 1

NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research Michael Lauer, MD, authored an [April 8 Open Mike blog](#) as the first in a series of essays describing cyberthreats and thanked the professionals who protect NIH’s rapidly increasing IT assets. “On any given day, NIH’s automated email threat detection technology automatically blocks more than 23 million threatening emails that may be phishing attempts or could include malware,” he writes. Systems nationwide are increasingly vulnerable as personnel work remotely, and attacks can exploit the health emergency through messages designed to resemble COVID-19 maps or alerts.

302(b) Sign On Letter

The Coalition for Health Funding, Committee for Education Funding, Coalition on Human Needs, and Campaign to Invest in America’s Workforce, are circulating their annual 302(b)

sign-on letter, a joint effort with the open for organizations to join. This sign on letter has been updated to reflect recent congressional action on the COVID emergency appropriations.

The letter requests Congress to increase the Labor HHS 302(b) allocation and gives examples how under funding has led to negative impacts on Americans' lives. To read the full letter [click here](#), and to sign on fill out [this Google form](#) by April 13th.

NIBIB NOSIs for COVID-19 Research

On April 10, the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB) [issued](#) three COVID-19-related Notices of Special Interest (NOSI) targeted to: [competitive revision](#) and administrative supplements for current grantees; [small business](#) R&D of technologies for COVID-19; and development of biomedical technologies for COVID-19 for [all applicants](#). NIBIB Director Bruce Tromberg, PhD, also authored a [blog post](#) on how social engineering and bioengineering can thwart the COVID-19 pandemic.

Requests for Public Comment

OBSSR Seeks Feedback on Scientific Priorities – April 30

The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) is [seeking stakeholder feedback](#) on research directions to support OBSSR's strategic plan. Specifically, OBSSR seeks feedback on "OBSSR would like input on the most important or cutting-edge, trans-disease research directions that would accelerate progress" in the following areas: synergy in basic and applied BSSR; BSSR resources, methods, and measures; and adoption of effective BSSR in practice. Responses are due by April 30 via submission via [obsr.ideascale.com](#).

NIDDK Seeks Feedback on Strategic Plan – May 18

NIH's National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) issued a March 16 [request for information](#) on the institute's five-year strategic plan. According to the RFI, "The goal of the process is to develop a broad vision for accelerating research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of diseases and conditions within the Institute's mission," and focuses on five broad themes for community input. [Comments are due](#) by May 18.

NINDS Seeks Feedback on Strategic Planning Process

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) is embarking on an institute-wide strategic planning process, and published a [July 2019 request for information](#) on the process. The goal of the process is to tune its practices and policies to its vision and mission, in order to better serve and anticipate the needs of the research and patient communities and the public. The mission of NINDS is to seek fundamental knowledge about the brain and nervous system and to use that knowledge to reduce the burden of neurological disease. Those interested in submitting comments for consideration as NINDS establishes a new strategic plan may still do so [through this form](#).

Job Postings

ASM Seeks Senior Grassroots Manager

The American Society for Microbiology is seeking a Senior Grassroots Manager. This newly created position is responsible for developing and implementing an organizational grassroots strategy to engage ASM members on public policy issues that affect the microbial sciences. [Learn more and apply here.](#)

AAI Seeks Science Policy Analyst

The American Association of Immunologists (AAI), a non-profit professional biomedical research association, seeks a motivated and intellectually inquisitive individual to provide scientific expertise to the AAI public affairs program. This position supports the Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs, the members of the AAI Committee on Public Affairs, and other AAI staff in developing scientific and policy positions that convey the views, concerns, and interests of the AAI membership. Qualified candidates should submit a cover letter with resume, including publications, and salary requirements, to FASEB Human Resources at resumes@faseb.org, or visit the [FASEB employment website](#) to apply. [See attached](#) and the [FASEB job site](#) to view a detailed job description.

Please Note: *If you have information of interest to the NIH advocacy community that you would like to share with the Ad Hoc Group, please forward it to Christa Wagner at chwagner@aamc.org or Tannaz Rasouli at trasouli@aamc.org.*