

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2008

The Honorable John Spratt  
Chairman  
House Committee on the Budget  
207 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on the Budget  
Room B71 CHOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan,

As you work to finalize the Fiscal Year 2009 Budget resolution, we urge you to allocate the sums necessary to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that at minimum includes an increase relative to the cost of biomedical inflation.

The National Institutes of Health are our country's preeminent research institutions, and represent our greatest hope for finding cures and treatments for the chronic diseases and debilitating conditions that afflict millions of Americans. NIH research is also an essential factor in containing soaring medical costs that threaten the viability of our nation's health care system.

As you are aware, the Administration's budget request proposed funding NIH-supported research at the FY08 enacted level. This flat funding for the NIH is deeply troubling given the high rate of biomedical inflation. The US Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimates that in Fiscal Year 2009, the NIH budget will need to increase by 3.5% simply to maintain its existing purchasing power.

Unfortunately, we have already seen the impact on biomedical research when the NIH budget fails to account for increases in inflation. In the short term, this amounts to a reduced number of NIH-funded grants awarded around the country each year. More broadly, inadequate funding for biomedical research delays or ends cutting-edge research, making it more difficult to retain talented American researchers in the United States. Even worse, flat funding further impedes our ability to mitigate or delay the onset of the chronic diseases which are the greatest contributor to spiraling health care costs.

We understand the challenges facing the Budget Committee and the difficulty of addressing priority issues in a time of limited resources. Nonetheless, as you craft this year's Budget Resolution, we urge you to consider the wide-ranging positive impact that adequate NIH funding can have on Americans' quality of life and the long-term cost-savings it can produce. We appreciate your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

  
Rep. Edward J. Markey

  
Rep. David G. Reichert

  
Rep. Janice Schakowsky

  
Rep. Christopher Shays

  
Rep. Joe Courtney

  
Rep. Christopher Smith