

Research advocates urge congress to advance top 5 science priorities in first 100 days

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Research!America urges the 114th Congress to take action on five science priorities in the first 100 days of the legislative session in order to elevate research and innovation on the nation's agenda. The five priorities: end sequestration, increase funding for our nation's research agencies, advance the 21st Century Cures initiative, repeal the medical device tax, and enact a permanent and enhanced R&D tax credit.

"With bipartisan support for pro-[innovation](#) policies, the wind will return to our back," said Mary Woolley, president and CEO of Research!America. "Declining funding for science agencies, counterproductive tax policies and the enervating impact of long-term [sequestration](#) caps have combined to undercut progress in meeting health challenges. If policymakers care about patients and the fiscal health of this nation, they will put more muscle behind efforts to overcome Alzheimer's, cancer and other disabling, deadly and budget-busting health threats."

The 21st Century Cures initiative, spearheaded by Representatives Fred Upton (R-Mich.) and Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), is a promising step in the right direction. Expected to become a bill early this year, it will likely focus on speeding medical progress from bench-to-bedside by integrating patient perspectives into the regulatory process, modernizing clinical trials, and reducing red tape, among other things.

Research!America has requested that the Research and Development Efficiency Act, which would establish a public process to streamline regulatory requirements for federally funded research, be included

among the measures under consideration for inclusion in the legislative package.

Attempts to repeal the [medical device](#) tax, a provision in the Affordable Care Act, have garnered bipartisan support as policymakers and industry leaders raise concerns about the tax's impact on jobs and innovation. According to a study commissioned by the Advanced Medical Technology Association, approximately 33,000 jobs were lost in the first year after implementation of the 2.3 percent tax.

The R&D tax credit, which was extended for one year in December, should be enhanced and made permanent as part of a broader tax reform legislative package in 2015. The credit, established in 1981, allows companies to deduct certain research expenses, but the short-term extensions have created uncertainty for businesses that rely on long-term planning for research investments.

"For companies ready to push the boundaries of medical innovation, our tax policies continue to set up roadblocks," said Woolley. "The new Congress must tackle tax reform in the immediate future to create a more favorable R&D environment for American industry."

Sequestration, the annual, automatic budget cuts established as part of the 2011 Budget Control Act, has taken a significant toll on the research ecosystem, forcing institutions to scale back or eliminate important studies and cut jobs. A two-year bipartisan budget deal for FY14 and FY15 reduced the cuts for those years, but the full sequester returns in FY16.

"Because of the completely arbitrary sequestration budget cuts, our ability to fight the next Ebola outbreak - through medical research, vaccine development and local preparedness - is one of many potential threats to health that we just aren't ready for," added Woolley. "This isn't

a minor hiccup, it's a major gap in our national security infrastructure. Congress must lift the sequester and invest in the research and capacity building necessary to truly protect public health."

The National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received razor thin increases, less than 1 percent, in the FY15 spending bill. The National Science Foundation and the Food and Drug Administration fared slightly better with increases of 2.4 percent and 1.4 percent respectively. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality was cut by .08 percent. Between 2001 and 2011, the U.S. experienced a substantial decline in its share of global R&D investments relative to other countries. According to the National Science Board, Asia's major economies combined now account for a larger share of scientific investment.

More information: www.researchamerica.org/

Provided by Research!America

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