

Report from Dr. Virendra B Mahesh of the activities of the Public Affairs Executive Committee (PAEC) and Enhanced Public Access Subcommittee of the Science Policy Committee of FASEB

As the SSR Representative to FASEB Dr. Mahesh served on the Public Affairs Executive Committee as well as Associate Director of FASEB. In addition, he served on the Enhanced Public Access Subcommittee of the Science Policy Committee of FASEB. The PAEC and Enhanced Public Access Subcommittee generally have a conference call once a month to discuss the current issues facing FASEB member societies.

The Public Affairs Executive Committee (PAEC) and The Board of Directors of the FASEB addressed several key issues pertaining to research and these are summarized below with appropriate links where more information can be found:

Highlights of FASEB Public Affairs Activities: October—December, 2004

Research Funding:

- In early October, Paul Kincade spoke with House L-HHS-Ed Appropriations Subcommittee Chair, Ralph Regula, at a small meeting hosted by the Campaign for Medical Research. Kincade urged Regula to work for the highest possible NIH increase. As FY2005 funding legislation headed for conference during the “lame duck” session, Kincade met with Betty Lou Taylor, staff director of the Senate L-HHS-Ed Appropriations Subcommittee, to discuss funding for NIH and scientific publications.
- FASEB President Paul Kincade wrote to USDA Secretary Ann Veneman asking her to create a National Institute of Food and Agriculture that would increase funding for investigator initiated research http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/ltr_11x3x04.pdf
- Representatives of FASEB societies met via conference call to develop recommendations and justifications for FY2006 funding levels for research programs at six federal agencies: NIH, NSF, USDA, VA, DOE and NASA. These recommendations were discussed and approved by the FASEB Board at its December 9 meeting.
- FASEB President Paul Kincade wrote to Senator Arlen Specter urging him to remain chair of the Senate L-HHS-Ed Appropriations subcommittee http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/letter_12x15x04.pdf. E-mails were sent to FASEB society members living in Pennsylvania asking them to contact Specter and urge him to stay on as L-HHS-Ed chair and continue his efforts to increase funding for NIH.

Scientific Publication:

- FASEB coordinated the discussion of member society perspectives on the NIH proposal for “enhanced access to scientific information.” The resulting FASEB statement http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/faseb_response_nih_access_11x3x4.htm was widely cited in discussions of this issue. Later, in response to a story that was critical of scientific journals, Paul Kincade’s letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal was published on November 10. In December, he met with Alan Leshner, CEO of AAAS, to share intelligence and perspectives on the NIH publication initiative.

Politicization of science:

- Paul Kincade wrote to Representative Garrett explaining the importance of travel to scientific meetings and explaining the harmful consequences of his amendment to limit

attendance of federally employed scientists. On November 16 he met with Garrett's legislative director to discuss the travel issue.

- Paul Kincade wrote to the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Committee and other Senate leaders supporting the Maloney Amendment and urged the Committee to protect the integrity of scientific evidence during FDA decision making

http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/ltr_11x5x4.pdf

- Paul Kincade joined AAMC President Jordan Cohen in a critique of DHHS statements about the appointment of government scientists as technical advisors to international organizations

http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/Steiger%20response%2010.6_1.pdf

NIH reauthorization:

- Paul Kincade met with staff of House Energy and Commerce committee to discuss plans for NIH reauthorization. Kincade discussed reauthorization legislation and other issues facing NIH with Institute Directors Tony Fauci (NIAID), Thomas Insel (NIMH), Francis Collins (NHGRI), Steve Katz (NIAMS), Jeremy Berg (NIGMS) and James Battey (NIDCD) and senior staff Mark Smolonski (Legislative Relations Director) and Richard Turman (Budget Director)

Animal Research:

- FASEB filed comments with USDA opposing new regulations for the care of non-purpose bred rats, mice and birds

http://www.faseb.org/opa/news/docs/usda_res_animal_10x29x4.pdf

By far the most important issues the PAEC handled were NIH funding and the "Open access" issue for scientific publications.

NIH Funding: For NIH funding for 2005, the FASEB had called for a 10% increase over 2004. The House approved 2.8% while the Senate recommended 4% increase. However this 4% required that some Social Security checks be issued on October 1, rather than September 30, to meet the budget restrictions. This move was not supported by the House and a 2.8% increase was approved. The increase was further reduced by an across the board cut imposed by the budget authority leaving the increase to be about 1.9%. The outlook for 2006 is bleak. It was rumored that the President's budget initially contained a 1% cut but after feedback and appeals from a number of sources will now have about a 2% increase. The PAEC and Board of Directors have prepared a position paper asking for a 6% increase.

Policy on Scientific Publications: With respect to "Enhanced Access" of scientific publications, there was language in the House Appropriations Bill for 2005 directing the NIH to come up with a policy promoting enhanced access by December 1, 2005. The issue was extensively discussed by the PAEC and the FASEB President as a representative of 22 scientific societies (SSR included) made several representations to NIH Director opposing the proposed NIH policy. This resulted in the proposal being published for public comment. Comments were sent by individuals, individual scientific societies, FASEB representing 22 societies (after obtaining censuses from member societies by the PAEC) and the Washington DC Principles group formed by societies whose journals are published by Highwire Press which represents 59 scientific societies. There were approximately 6,000 responses. In addition to responding to NIH, the FASEB Director also wrote to members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committee

stating their objection to the NIH proposal. The legislative language was changed directing the NIH to promote a policy of enhanced access of publications after fair consideration to the feed-back received and without endangering the existence of high quality scientific journals.

The original proposal called for the author to submit all articles supported by NIH to Pub Med. The first submission would be the accepted manuscript which would be made available to everyone and then the final edited manuscript which would be released 6 months after publication, without any regard to the journal policy on access control. PubMed would also serve as an archiving source for the article. As a result of extensive feed-back, it is rumored that the policy would still use PubMed as the archiving source and all articles will be released to the public free of charge within 12 months of publication. NIH announced a date and time for presenting this policy in a conference call setting so that individuals could ask questions. The announcement was postponed indefinitely.

The position taken by FASEB can be viewed at the link for scientific publications in the FASEB report summary at the top of this report. The response to the NIH proposal as well as that from various scientific societies can be viewed at Washington DC Principles website. www.dcpinciples.org/responses/index.htm

The above activities and results attest to the advantage of working individually and as a group in organizations such as FASEB and the Washington DC Principles Group to influence science policy. When the NIH policy is announced, the PAEC and the Enhanced Public Access Subcommittee of the Science Policy Committee of FASEB will take whatever action is considered necessary at that time.

Respectfully submitted,
Virendra B Mahesh