



ASN Health and Nutrition Public Policy Newsletter November 20, 2007

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Congress has adjourned for a two week Thanksgiving recess. The House and Senate will reconvene on Dec. 4 and Dec. 3, respectively. Members of Congress encountered more gridlock than consensus in the week leading up to the holiday.

Congress spars with the White House over Labor-HHS-Ed Conference Report

Prior to adjournment, the House failed to override the President's veto of HR 3043, the \$606 billion [FY 2008 Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill](#), by a vote of 277-141. A two-thirds majority is needed to override a presidential veto.

The bill that emerged from the House and Senate conference committee and was sent to the President would have allocated \$30 billion for fiscal year 2008 to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), representing an increase of \$900 million for research. This final version of the bill was \$100 million beyond what the Senate had proposed. The Labor-HHS-Education bill also included \$116.5 million for the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which funds most national nutrition monitoring activities. Claiming "fiscal responsibility" and chastising Congress on pork spending, the President issued his first veto of any of the 12 annual spending bills.

The one FY 2008 spending that has been signed into law by Bush is the \$459 billion annual Defense appropriations bill. This measure included language to extend the current continuing resolution (CR) and keep federal spending at FY 2007 levels until December 14.

Congressional leaders are now considering a "split the difference" approach to the appropriations bills. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said last week that Democrats likely will send Bush an omnibus appropriations bill next month that splits the \$22 billion difference between the budgets. According to Democrats, doing so would put Bush in the uncomfortable position of having to veto a \$484 billion bill that combines all non-defense spending, from veterans' health to medical research, and from food safety programs to national parks. Other Capitol Hill sources say that if no agreement can be reached, another year-long CR will be on the table, with adjustments in some priority programs but no earmarks.

In a floor speech, House Appropriations Chairman Dave Obey (D-WI) outlined the impact a "split the difference" approach would have on the NIH. "For medical research into diseases like cancer, Parkinson's and diabetes at the National Institutes of Health, meeting the President halfway would put us \$700 million below the bill we are

considering today. That means about 700 fewer grants for research to treat and cure so many deadly diseases.”

Senate Farm Bill action stalls

The Senate Food and Energy Security Act of 2007, which was approved unanimously by the Senate Agriculture Committee last month, stalled in the Senate as the leadership on both sides of the aisle failed to reach an agreement on what and how many amendments would be offered. Debate on the bill began November 6 and ground to a quick halt after Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) invoked a procedure to limit amendments to only those relevant to farm bill issues. Republicans objected, seeking to offer amendments on topics such as the alternative minimum tax, estate taxes, and immigration issues.

In a last ditch effort to break the stalemate, Reid filed a cloture motion to limit debate on Nov. 16. Cloture was rejected by a 55 to 42 vote. Senate Agriculture Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) expressed the desire to move ahead with considering relevant amendments to assure that final passage of a Farm Bill, when negotiated with the House bill, can pass before Congress adjourns in December. The process awaits the Republicans making clear what amendments they want to include in a package, but the legislation competes with spending measures as well as many other measures when the House and Senate return in December. Not since 1996 has the Farm Bill debate gone into January of the subsequent year. President Bush has threatened to veto the Farm Bill over the \$283 billion price tag. Harkin and some Republicans in the House separately have suggested that it might be necessary to extend the current Farm Bill by one or two years if the stalemate cannot be overcome. However, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN) objected to this approach, saying, “Talk about a farm bill extension is premature, and we should be focusing on getting a new farm bill finished. The budget situation isn't getting any better, and a year from now, we may have less money available to write the farm bill.”

Last week when consideration of Farm Bill amendments seemed likely, ASN issued an Action Alert regarding one by Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) that would restore \$74 million of the funding for the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS). \$600 million in IFAFS funds would be eliminated under the current Senate Farm Bill. We wish to thank those ASN members who participated in the alert by sending emails to their senators. Should the process continue when Congress returns, and if appropriate, ASN will re-issue the alert.

The House passed its version of the 2007 Farm Bill in July. Only if the Senate passes a measure can House and Senate leaders convene a conference committee to work out differences in the two versions for final passage.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Call for applications: 2008 NIH Pioneer and New Innovator Awards 2008

The NIH is calling for applications for the 2008 NIH Director's Pioneer and New Innovator Awards. Both programs support exceptionally creative scientists who take highly innovative — and often unconventional — approaches to major challenges in biomedical or behavioral research. Pioneer Awards are open to scientists at any career stage, while New Innovator Awards are reserved for new investigators who have not

received an NIH regular research (R01) or similar grant. Pioneer Awards provide \$2.5 million in direct costs over five years and New Innovator Awards provide \$1.5 million in direct costs over the same period. NIH expects to make five to 10 Pioneer Awards and up to 24 New Innovator Awards in September 2008.

Pioneer Award applications will be accepted from Dec. 16, 2007, to Jan. 16, 2008.

Application instructions are at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-08-013.html>.

The New Innovator Award application period is from March 3 to 31, 2008. See <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-08-014.html> for application instructions.

Study finds reasons for women's departure from the sciences

Women scientists are not pursuing advanced research careers because of a heavier burden of family responsibility and lower confidence compared to men, according to a study by the NIH of its own research staff. Although women comprise nearly half of all undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral scientists nationwide, after committing 10 to 15 years to scientific training, many leave academic research during the career transition to faculty or tenured positions. At the NIH, only 29 percent of the tenure-track principal investigators (PI) and 19 percent of tenured PIs— the NIH equivalent of assistant and full professors, respectively — are women. The study, conducted by the Second Task Force on the Status of NIH Intramural Women Scientists, had over 1,300 male and female NIH postdoctoral researchers, of the 2,400 total post-docs at the NIH, respond to a survey. The task force found that although men and women rated themselves equally when it came to professional skill, men were significantly more confident that they could obtain a PI position and become tenured. The reported contributing factors to this disparity fall into two categories: family responsibilities and self-confidence. For more information, please visit the [NIH News Room](#).

New faces at NCMHD

The National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD) at the NIH has appointed Ileana Collado Herrell, Ph.D., to be the new Director for the Division of Scientific Strategic Planning and Policy Analysis. Herrell will be the NCMHD's chief liaison with the NIH's Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis. She will also have responsibility for producing reports on NIH research that seeks to eliminate health disparities and address the health needs of medically underserved individuals. Herrell has served as a consultant to governments and nongovernmental agencies in more than 24 countries including the International Labor Office and the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

NCMHD announces that Nathaniel Stinson, Jr., Ph.D, M.D. will be the Acting Director for the Office of Scientific Programs. Stinson was president of The Health Literacy Foundation in Munster, IN, and before that, Stinson served as the Director of the Center for Optimal Health and professor of Family and Community Medicine at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, TN. Chief among Stinson's responsibilities will be direct oversight of the NCMHD's Community Based Participatory Research Initiative and Loan Repayment Programs.

Food labels sometimes make a difference

Consumers, food companies, third-party entities, and governments play a role in determining which attributes are described on product labels. The economics behind food labeling provides insight into the dynamics of voluntary food labeling and the types

of market failures best addressed through mandatory labeling requirements. For more information, please visit the [ERS Amber Waves Website](#).

2008 Food Assistance Research Conference

The annual Food Assistance Research Conference identifies emerging research issues related to domestic food assistance and nutrition programs administered by USDA. Recently completed research will also be discussed. This year's conference, *Recent Findings and Emerging Issues*, will be held on Dec. 6 in the Frederick Waugh Auditorium at the Economic Research Service, 1800 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C. Attendance is free but registration is required due to limited space. For more information, please visit the [ERS Website](#).

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

WCRFI and AICR report on cancer prevention highlights importance of nutrition

The World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRFI) and the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) released a comprehensive report on cancer prevention called *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: A Global Perspective*, a two-day workshop was held to explain the research and analysis covered in the report.

The report describes the strength of evidence for suggesting relationships between numerous factors, (such as vitamin C, foods with fiber, processed meat, phytochemicals, and physical activity), that enhance or reduce cancer risk.

The report's recommendations are based on a review of 7,000 studies on all aspects of diet, physical activity, weight management and cancer that are predominantly case control and cohort population studies. Several speakers noted the limitations of drawing conclusions from epidemiological studies, which are discussed in Chapter 11 of the report, and called for funding human clinical trials to confirm the report's recommendations. The human studies, as noted, are complicated by many factors, including genetic differences of subjects; confounding variables (i.e. the Aspirin effect on fiber, pesticide effect on hormones, and human adaptation to long term dietary intake and exposures); nutrient interactions; variations in food composition over years, climatic regions, soil differences, etc.; poor biomarkers; nutrient interactions; bioavailability of nutrients; and dose responses. Included in the report is a long list of research projects needed to close the gap on the role of diet in cancer prevention and treatment.

The basis for the following recommendations is the panel of experts' judgments of 'convincing' and 'probable' causal relationships between a factor and a specific cancer that are presented in an extensive matrix of the relationships.

1. [Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.](#)
2. [Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.](#)
3. [Avoid sugary drinks. Limit consumption of energy-dense foods \(particularly processed foods high in added sugar, or low in fiber, or high in fat\).](#)
4. [Eat more of a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes such as beans.](#)
5. [Limit consumption of red meats \(such as beef, pork and lamb\) and avoid processed meats.](#)
6. [If consumed at all, limit alcoholic drinks to 2 a day for men and 1 a day for women.](#)
7. [Limit consumption of salty foods and foods processed with salt \(sodium\).](#)
8. [Don't use supplements to protect against cancer.](#)

Special Population Recommendations:

9. [It is best for mothers to breastfeed exclusively for up to 6 months and then add other liquids and foods.](#)
10. [After treatment, cancer survivors should follow the recommendations for cancer prevention.](#)

Although some of the recommendations have proven to be controversial, report authors hope it will influence policy decisions such as the 2010 Dietary Guidelines and the upcoming Child Nutrition reauthorization. For more information, details on the report, and to order a copy, please visit the [AICR Website](#) or www.dietandcancerreport.org.

Questions about this newsletter? Please contact Mary Lee Watts, ASN Director of Public Policy and Communications, at (301) 634-7112 or mwatts@nutrition.org.