



ASN Health and Nutrition Public Policy Newsletter October 16, 2007

ACTION ALERT!

In the next couple of days you should receive via e-mail an action alert from FASEB regarding support for Senate passage of the Labor-Health and Human Services-Education (Labor-HHS-Ed) appropriations bill. ASN strongly encourages you to participate by sending a letter by fax or e-mail to your Senators' offices asking him or her to vote for the bill and to let them know that supporting NIH results in scientific breakthroughs and discoveries that promise to improve the health and the quality of life for millions of people.

If you did not receive the Action Alert, you may access it through the [FASEB Legislative Action Center](#).

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Appropriations Showdown: Labor-HHS-Ed up this week

As previously reported, Congress averted a government shutdown by passing a continuing resolution (CR) to fund programs at FY 2007 levels until November 16. However, the push and pull over federal spending has only just begun. With President Bush vowing to veto any domestic spending bills that exceed his request and Democrats insisting on passing legislation that expands domestic programs, both sides are squaring off for a showdown.

On the Senate's agenda this week is the Labor-HHS-Ed appropriations bill, which funds the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other agencies of interest to ASN. The bill would provide a total of \$605.5 billion in spending, 75 percent of which funds mandatory programs. The bill's \$149.9 billion in discretionary spending exceeds FY 2007 spending by \$5.5 billion, and exceeds the President's budget request by \$9.6 billion. The House and Senate will then conference the two versions of the bill, and sources say informal negotiations have already begun. Because the Senate version of the bill provides higher funding levels for the NIH, the medical and scientific community is hopeful that the Senate version will prevail in conference.

President Bush likely will veto the bill, which may force Congress to include the Labor-HHS-Ed bill in a "mini-bus" of other bills wrapped up with the Military Construction-VA spending bill, one of the only bills that appears veto proof. Another option would be to try and override the veto. This strategy may prove tough, however, since House Republicans have vowed to support the President's spending requests.

Rumors have circulated that Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) is considering offering a second CR to fund the federal government through December 20 and to replace the one that will expire November 16, which was the original target adjournment date. While Pelosi has so far denied the rumors, sources on the Hill expect Congress to be in session well into December.

Power struggles and budget issues delay Senate Farm Bill activity

Infighting among Senate Agriculture Committee members has further delayed action on the 2007 Farm Bill. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) until now has been unable to garner the support needed to proceed with Committee consideration of a draft bill. However, Harkin has been negotiating behind the scenes and sources say the Committee likely will take up the bill next week. The process may even go quickly, with only a

handful of amendments expected when this article went to press. As drafts of the various titles have circulated, major differences have arisen among Committee members, most of them along geographical rather than political lines. A tight budget also has complicated matters.

Senate budget rules require the Farm Bill to fit within the current baseline estimates, meaning that offsets must be found if additional funding is to be allocated. The Senate Finance Committee, under the leadership of Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT), approved a bill two weeks ago that provided additional funds. All of the funds, however, were allocated between a disaster trust fund and new tax benefits for farmers who enroll their land in existing farm bill conservation programs. Baucus is a member of the Agriculture Committee. The tax package did not give any unallocated money for Harkin to spend, and additional funding will be hard to come by. This does not bode well for research.

Moreover, Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad (D-ND), who sits on both the Agriculture and Finance committees, was quoted earlier this month as saying the only "safe" title of the Farm Bill is the Nutrition Title, and everything else could potentially see cuts. Conrad recently released his three versions of the farm bill: 1) increase spending by \$10.4 billion if there is no reduction in the direct payment program, 2) increase spending by \$11.4 billion while cutting direct payments by \$1 billion over five years, or 3) increase spending by \$11.9 billion, but cut direct payments by \$1.5 billion. Conrad's bill seems to provide \$4.2 billion for nutrition.

Lastly, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has made it clear that appropriations bills are the priority, therefore, floor time for consideration of the Farm Bill continues to be delayed. Sources say that if Harkin does not move the Farm Bill to the Senate floor by the Thanksgiving break, Reid may introduce the House-passed farm bill for Senate consideration.

Bill proposes stricter trans fat labeling

Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) introduced legislation to address the loophole that allows for manufactures to label foods as containing "*zero trans fats*" if the trans fat content is less than 0.5g per serving. The '0g' trans fat claim has inspired heavy criticism from consumer groups in recent years. Although this provides food makers with a margin of flexibility in their formulations, it also means that people could be consuming certain levels of trans fats without being aware of it. H.R. 3783, the Trans Fat Truth in Labeling Act of 2007, would require foods currently labeled as "zero grams" trans fat to have an asterisk or other notation stating that the trans fat content of a serving is less than 0.5 gram. This legislation is supported by the American Heart Association and the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Presidential candidate introduces legislation on nutrition

Democratic presidential contender Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) introduced a bill requiring nutrition and physical education standards in schools. S. 2066, the Back to School: Improving Standards for Nutrition and Physical Education in Schools Act would make the [\(IOM\) recommendations](#) the national standard for foods sold in schools outside of the school meal programs. It would also designate a committee to review the standards at least every five years, strengthen physical education program standards, and award competitive grants to support teacher training and implementation of physical education programs. S. 2066 currently has no cosponsors. It is unlikely to gain momentum; however, it does reflect the candidate's position on nutrition and physical activity in schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

CSREES posts FY 2008 National Research Initiative grant information

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) at USDA has posted the information for FY 2008 National Research Initiative (NRI) grants. Although FY 2008 funding levels have not been finalized, CSREES anticipates about \$190 million will be available

for support of this program. Of this amount, no more than 22 percent will be made available to fund integrated projects. The remaining funds will be used to fund research projects. Key nutrition-related program areas include:

- Animal growth and nutrient use
- Bioactive food components
- Food quality and value
- Food safety; both biological and epidemiological approaches
- Human nutrition and obesity

Deadlines for letters of intent and grant applications can be found at www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/nri/nri_topics.html.

Established in 1991, the NRI is a competitive, peer-reviewed grant program at USDA charged with funding research, education, and extension activities to address key problems of national and regional importance in biological, environmental, physical, and social sciences relevant to agriculture, food, the environment, and communities. The NRI also supports the integration of research, education, and extension to generate, translate, and transfer new technology and knowledge into practical applications focused on solving problems of national importance. For more information, go to the [CSREES website](#).

NIH launches open-access dataset of genetic and clinical data

The NIH is launching one of the most extensive collections of genetic and clinical data ever made freely available to researchers worldwide. Called SHARe (SNP Health Association Resource), the online dataset enables qualified researchers to access a wealth of data from large population-based studies, starting with the landmark Framingham Heart Study. Funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, SHARe is expected to accelerate discoveries linking genes and health, thereby advancing scientists' understanding of the causes and prevention of cardiovascular disease and other disorders. For more information, please visit the [NIH News Room](#).

NCCAM expands Centers of Excellence in CAM research program

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has added three new Centers of Excellence for Research on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) to its centers program. These centers will explore the biological effects of a number of plant-derived compounds and preparations found in CAM products, such as dietary supplements, on pancreatic diseases, autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, and Alzheimer's disease. The Centers of Excellence apply cutting-edge technology to basic and clinical research on a wide range of CAM practices and products, and they are one part of NCCAM's larger research centers program. The program also includes Developmental Centers for Research on CAM, which are partnerships between CAM institutions and established research institutions to conduct exploratory research, and International Centers for Research on CAM, which are collaborations of U.S. and foreign teams studying traditional medical systems. For more information, please visit the [NIH News Room](#).

ERS examines the economic perspective of Foods Stamps and food choices

Food Stamp program participants, like other Americans, struggle with nutrition problems associated with poor food choices. The USDA Economic Research Service's (ERS) new Economic Information Bulletin compiles evidence to help answer the question of whether the Food Stamp Program can do more to improve the food choices of participants. It examines the role affordability of healthful foods plays in influencing food choices and the likely success of any policy targeted at changing food choices through Food Stamp bonuses or restrictions. It also examines other approaches to changing food choices, including nutrition education and potential strategies drawn from behavioral economics literature. According to ERS, meaningful

improvements in the diets of Food Stamp recipients will likely depend on a combination of many tactics, and measuring the effect of any policy change on food choices and health outcomes remains a challenge. For more information and the Bulletin, please visit the [ERS Publications Website](#).

The effects of Food Stamps on obesity

A report conducted by Middle Tennessee State University as part of a Cooperative Research Agreement with ERS looks at the relationship between the Food Stamp program and obesity. The report analyzes data collected between 1985 and 2000 from the original 1979 cohort of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to examine the effects of the Food Stamp Program on obesity. The effects are found to differ by gender, level of benefits, and duration of participation. Results suggest that, for females, current program participation increases body mass index (by 0.5 index point on average) and increases the probability of being obese (between 2 and 5 percentage points). Current program participation was not found to have significant effects for males. Long-term participation is found to increase obesity for both females and males. For more information and the report, please visit the [ERS Publications Website](#).

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Children in Balance at Tufts University announces request for applications

The [Children in Balance](#) (CIB) Initiative, located at the Friedman School for Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and chaired by ASN member Dr. Christina Economos, is requesting applications from cities across the country to implement *The Balance (Bringing Healthy Eating and Active Living to Children's Environments) Project*. This two-year, community-based research intervention targeting first through third graders and their families will provide selected communities with training, tools, and funding (\$300,000 over two years). This will enable them to create an environment that surrounds children with healthier food options and opportunities for active living in their community.

From the RFA process, CIB will select six communities that are similar in their level of community readiness to make social change. Three will be randomized to receive the intervention and three will be randomized to serve as control communities. Letters of Intent are due by Nov. 15. For the full announcement and application, please visit [Children in Balance](#).

32nd National Nutrient Databank Conference to be held in Ottawa, Canada

The 32nd National Nutrient Databank Conference (NNDC), *Nutrient Databases Without Borders*, will be held May 7-9, 2008 at the Holiday Inn, Plaza le Chaudière in Ottawa, Canada. Well known researchers and authorities will present lectures and updates on issues and challenges related to nutrient databases. This will be the first NNDC hosted outside of the U.S., and it is an ideal occasion to explore the differences and similarities surrounding the generation and use of nutrient data in both countries.

For more information, please go to the [NNDC website](#).

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

American Society for Nutrition
9650 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20814
www.nutrition.org

Join us at the [ASN Annual Meeting](#), held at [Experimental Biology 2008](#), April 5 - 9, in San Diego, California.