

AIBS news

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AIBS *news*

OCTOBER 2010 / VOLUME 60 NUMBER 9

Biologists Meet with Members of Congress

In August, AIBS launched the second annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. This nationwide initiative is intended to spur individual biologists and research centers to meet with their members of Congress during the August congressional district work period.

"It is exciting to see the growing interest in this effort from the scientific community," said AIBS director of public policy Robert Gropp. "This year a number of leading scientific societies and organizations have joined us to sponsor this important event." In addition to AIBS, sponsors of the 2010 event were the Botanical Society of America, Genetics Society of America, Long Term Ecological Research Network, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Society of Systematic Biologists, and University of Michigan Biological Station. Stanford University's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve was a supporter of the 2010 initiative.

Each August, representatives and senators spend time in their districts and home states. This is an opportunity for individuals to meet with members of Congress to demonstrate the importance of their research to the individuals responsible for casting the votes that shape the nation's science policy.

"Inviting your member of Congress to visit your laboratory, to see what you do and how many people your work involves, is one of the best ways to educate your leaders and legislators about scientific research. They get to see where the money they appropriated to NIH [the National Institutes of Health], NSF [the National Science Foundation], USDA [the US Department of Agriculture], and other funding agencies goes, how carefully it is

spent, and what amazing work is done with it," said Sherry Marts, executive director of the Genetics Society of America.

According to Marts, this is an important opportunity to put a face on science. "Most people get their images of scientists and science from Hollywood—a visit with a scientist is a great reality check," Marts said.

Keith Crandall, president of the Society of Systematic Biologists, agrees. "Congressional visits are especially effective for fields like systematic biology as the importance of basic science is not always obvious to those outside of science. These visits allow biologists to inform congressional members of the exciting science being performed and its potential contributions to society."

The second annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event occurred throughout the month of August. Dozens of scientists and research facilities from at least 27 states participated.

Organizations interested in sponsoring the 2011 Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event should contact Robert Gropp at rgropp@aibs.org.

AIBS Asks EPA, NOAA to Elevate Science in Agency Planning

In July and August, AIBS commented on draft strategic plans for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). In both cases, AIBS requested that science be elevated to an agency-wide priority to reflect the fact that science is essential to the work of each agency. Additionally, both agencies were reminded of a recent White House memorandum directing federal agencies to "implement strategies for increasing the benefits

for science and society derived from scientific collections by following the recommendations in the report by the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections."

To read these or other AIBS policy statements, please visit www.aibs.org/position-statements/.

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original articles in English

- **Is Large-scale Production of Biofuel Possible?** By genetically engineering certain crops, there is potential to produce biofuels commercially. Mariam Sticklen, of Michigan State University, illustrates that there are other benefits too, such as alleviating environmental contamination from fossil fuel production and use, and improving rural economies. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/sticklen.html.
- **Sea Turtles: Ancient Creatures with Modern Problems.** The long history of sea turtle exploitation

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I N S I D E

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laid the foundation for declines among many populations today. Katherine Mansfield, of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, College of William and Mary, offers ideas for management and conservation programs as well as suggestions on how the public can help ensure the survival of these ancient creatures. Read the article at www.actionbioscience.org/biodiversity/mansfield.html.

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports

Public Policy Report for 2 August 2010

- **Biologists visit members of Congress.** AIBS is pleased to announce the start of the second annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event. This nationwide initiative is intended to spur individual biologists and research centers to meet with their members of Congress during the August congressional district work period.
- **White House releases guidance on science priorities in FY 2012 budget.** On 21 July, the White House's Office of Management and Budget and Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a joint memorandum providing guidance to federal agencies on the formulation of science and technology priorities in the fiscal year 2012 budget. The memo directs agencies to prioritize funding in six areas: (1) promoting sustainable economic growth and job creation; (2) defeating the most dangerous diseases and achieving better health outcomes for all while reducing health care costs; (3) moving toward a clean energy future to reduce dependence on energy imports while curbing greenhouse gas emissions; (4) understanding, adapting to, and mitigating the impacts of global climate change; (5) managing the competing demands on land, freshwater, and the oceans for the

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production of food, fiber, biofuels, and ecosystem services, based on sustainability and biodiversity; and (6) developing the technologies to protect our troops, citizens, and national interests.

- **Congress racing to catch up on appropriations.** The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have been rushing to complete as many of the appropriations bills for fiscal year 2011 as possible in the weeks leading up to the August Congressional recess. Over the past two weeks, the committees have advanced a number of spending plans, although to date only two bills have passed the House of Representatives. No bills have yet cleared the Senate. In a typical year, the House has passed most, if not all, of the 12 appropriations bills prior to the August recess.
- **Senate Committee Passes COMPETES Reauthorization.** On 22 July, the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee approved a bill that would reauthorize research and education programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and other federal science agencies. The America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (S. 3605), sponsored by Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), would authorize increased funding for the NSF for three years. S. 3605 would also reinforce the roles of NASA and NOAA in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

Public Policy Report for 19 July 2010

- **Senator Rockefeller introduces COMPETES bill.** On 15 July, Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) introduced legislation that would reauthorize the America COMPETES (Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science) Act. Like the measure passed by the House of

Representatives in June (HR 5116), Rockefeller's legislation (S. 3605) would seek to stimulate innovation and improve science education by increasing funding authorizations for federal agencies that support basic research.

- **Congress aims to cut agency funding in FY 2011.** The House and

Senate Appropriations Committees are continuing to work on fiscal year 2011 spending bills. To date, eight bills have been approved by House Appropriations Subcommittees and three bills have been adopted by the full Senate Appropriations Committee. All of these measures have included less funding than requested by the president last February.

- **Presidential bioethics commission considers synthetic biology.** The president has directed his Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues to report on the emerging field of synthetic biology. The commission recently heard from scientists and other witnesses about the promise and risks of synthetic biology.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION, 09/30/10

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Free distribution outside the mails	192	183
Total distribution	6302	4215
Copies not distributed	240	135
Total	6542	4350
Percent Pd. and/or requested circ.	96.95%	95.66%

I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Rebecca Simon, Director