

ASN Member Talking Points for Congressional Meetings

Summary

1. The American Society of Nephrology and its members are committed to curing kidney disease, but there will not be cures without research. ASN is the leading advocate for NIH kidney research.
2. Funding NIH is a really smart investment. NIH research generates jobs, stimulates the economy, and produces life-saving medical advances that bring down the cost of healthcare.
3. Up to 26 million Americans have kidney disease, a disease that is projected to increase and can be very debilitating. Many people with kidney disease cannot fully participate in work and family life. We need your help fighting this disease.
4. Please replace sequestration with a bipartisan and balanced approach to deficit reduction. We believe additional cuts to medical research funding and other federal non-defense discretionary programs will limit improvements to patient care and limit economic recovery.

Detail

1. Introduce yourself and review ASN's mission, including dedication to advancing medical research.

- I want to start by thanking you for the opportunity to meet. [Give them one of your business cards and a copy of the following two fact sheets: 1) Kidney Disease Research: From Concept to Cure and 2) NIH Research Funding for your state.]
- I'm a/the TITLE/POSITION at INSTITUTION. I XXXXX [Fill in the blank by telling them a little about yourself. For instance, if you're an investigator, talk about the kind of research you conduct.]
- I'm also a member of the American Society of Nephrology, which represents 14,000 physicians, scientists, and other healthcare professionals dedicated to curing kidney disease. Supporting medical research is central to this commitment. Research is the only path to improving quality of life for kidney patients and achieving meaningful advances towards cures. [Give them a copy of the "ASN: Leading the Fight," handout.]
- Today I would like to speak with you about medical research and how important it is for patients and our economy. Please stop me at any point if you have questions or comments.

2. Discuss the public health importance of kidney disease research [hold up the Kidney Disease Research: From Concept to Cure fact sheet]

- Chronic kidney disease affects a staggering number of Americans today: up to 26 million, or 1 in 9 adults. The growth in hypertension and diabetes, the leading causes of kidney disease, means more Americans than ever will develop kidney disease. And kidney disease

is the 8th leading cause of death in the United States today. Without research advances, kidney professionals cannot improve patient care and treatment.

- We have to protect funding for the National Institutes of Health. NIH has funded recent discoveries in kidney medicine that will help prevent disease in the most at-risk populations, save millions of lives, and drive down healthcare costs.
- I'm here today to ask for you to support a bipartisan and balanced approach to deficit reduction. Cuts to medical research funding and other federal non-defense discretionary programs are counterproductive. They'll cost jobs and economic activity.

3. Discuss the economic benefits of kidney disease research [hold up the NIH Research Funding fact sheet for your state]

- The facts show that investments in NIH generate jobs, stimulate the economy, and produces life-saving advances that bring down the cost of healthcare.
- More than 80 percent of NIH funding flows back to states. One in every 500 full-time US jobs is supported by medical research. And every dollar invested in medical research generates \$2.60 of economic activity.
- Most importantly, medical research enables life-saving advances that bring down the cost of healthcare.
- Funding by NIH led to the discovery of APOL1, a gene that explains why many African-Americans are more than four times as likely as Caucasians to develop kidney failure. Now NIH-supported researchers are bringing us closer to a cure. [Feel free to cite your own example(s) as well.]

4. Discuss the consequences of further cuts to medical research and non-defense discretionary spending if sequestration takes effect.

- Under sequestration, NIH's budget would be slashed \$1.6 billion in Fiscal Year 2013.
- That would stifle progress in discoveries and innovations, and hurt businesses, labs, and researchers. As funding dries up, many labs, as well as businesses that support them, will be forced to downsize or close their doors altogether.
- That would also make it harder to attract young researchers. According to NIH Director Francis Collins, only 1 out of 6 young researchers receive grant funding for research today, which is the lowest level in NIH's history.
- Cuts to research funding would stifle progress for promising research like APOL1 that would not only improve patient care and treatment but also drive down healthcare costs. [Feel free to cite your own example(s) as well.]

5. Wrap up

- Medical research is a great investment. Further cuts would hurt patients, researchers, lab, businesses, and the US economy.

- Most developed countries are dramatically increasing their budgets for research today. They have been ramping up funding and are gaining on us as the world leader in medical research. If we want to remain the world leader, we need to, at a minimum, protect research funding.
- Please work with other members of Congress to replace sequestration with a bipartisan and balanced approach to deficit reduction.
- Thank you again for meeting with me today. I am happy to answer any questions you have at any time. Please also feel free to contact me if there's any other information I can provide that would be helpful.
- Can I get a picture with you? [If they say yes, please email your picture(s) to policy@asn-online.org.]

For questions about how to balance the federal budget and pay down the debt [only discuss if asked]

- ASN supports a balanced approach to deficit reduction that includes new revenues. Even if Congress cut all discretionary funding, there would still be a half trillion dollar deficit. We need to think carefully about where to cut, and recognize that more revenue is needed.
- Kidney disease and medical research in general are important. We believe they should be protected. It is ultimately the decision of Congress to decide how the budget is balanced and federal debt paid down. Whatever you decide, I hope you do not make further cuts to medical research. As I mentioned, it's one of the smartest investments we can make. Cuts to medical research would be counterproductive.