

March 18, 2014

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman, House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
2409 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20025

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for your leadership of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. I am writing on behalf of the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) in support of Title III, Section 307 of H.R. 4186, the "FIRST Act of 2014," that provides guidance to federal agencies for conducting prize competitions. ASN, the world's largest kidney health professional organization with 15,000 members, especially supports efforts that bolster the ability of federal agencies to solve scientific, biotechnology, or engineering challenges.

Competition is an effective way to promote revolutionary and cost-effective innovations that benefit America and humanity. The XPRIZE Foundation is just one example of how competition can spur innovation that achieves significant contributions to humanity. Successes include the launch of the private space industry, the creation of a 135 mile per gallon energy-efficient car, and improved oil recovery cleanup at triple the standard rate.

The care of patients with kidney disease is another important area in serious need of innovation that could reap huge savings for the U.S. government, and ultimately taxpayers. More than 20 million Americans suffer from kidney disease and nearly 450,000 receive dialysis through the Medicare End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Program at an annual cost of \$35 billion. Since the ESRD Program's inception in 1972, improvements to dialysis have been incremental and still fail to restore patients to productive lives. A prize focused on therapies that could provide better patient care could significantly reduce the burden of kidney disease and cost of the ESRD Program.

ASN encourages the committee to support a prize in this area. The society also believes that increased private and public investments in science and research are vital to preserving America's global leadership in innovation and discovery.

Thank you for your support of increased investments in science and research. ASN stands ready to assist you in your important work. Please do not hesitate to call on us if the society can ever be of help to you, your staff, or the committee.

Sincerely,



Thomas H. Hostetter, MD, Chair  
Public Policy Board