



ASN Urges Congress to Support NIH in FY 2009

The American Society of Nephrology (ASN) is disheartened by President George W. Bush’s request for flat funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in fiscal year (FY) 2009. The \$29.2 billion budget request fails to keep pace with inflation, creating a net loss in funding and a decline in federal support for research that can improve the health of the American population. **ASN urges Congress to restore funding to NIH by supporting a \$31.1 billion budget in FY 2009, a \$1.9 billion, or 6.6%, increase over FY 2008 and the President’s request.**

Since the doubling of the NIH budget between 1998 and 2003, NIH has failed to receive the funds necessary to sustain the momentum achieved by the doubling; once inflation is taken into account, the budget has declined each year since 2003. If the President’s request is enacted in FY 2009, the agency’s net budget will have declined by nearly \$4 billion—or 13%—since the end of the doubling period. The cut in spending power limits the amount of research undertaken in US academic medical centers and research institutes, stifles innovation, and discourages a new generation of investigators from entering the research pipeline.

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009 President’s Request	% Change FY 08 to FY 09	ASN Request FY 2009
	NIH	\$29.23 billion	\$29.23 billion	0%	\$31.1 billion

According to ASN President Peter S. Aronson, MD, Professor of Medicine and Physiology at Yale University School of Medicine, “Flat or declining NIH funding—while slowing current efforts to understand disease mechanisms and develop new treatments and forms of prevention—will have an even greater detrimental effect on future research. Young physicians are far less likely to make the sacrifice in time and income to train as investigators when they foresee a very low probability of obtaining grant funding. Flat or reduced NIH funding in FY 2009 will have lasting negative effects well beyond the current fiscal year.”

From 2003 to 2007, success rates for research project (R01) grants (or R01-equivalent awards) dropped from 30% to 24%. The number of R01 grants has steadily declined during the same period, from 30,000 in 2004 to approximately 28,000 in 2007. Success rates for first submission in an application cycle declined from 29% in 1999 to 12% in 2007, lengthening the amount of time investigators must subsist without sufficient grant support. NIH’s FY 2009 proposed budget would eliminate inflationary increases for research project grants (RPGs), decrease the number of new and competing RPGs, decrease funding to the Office of the Director, and reduce the cap on salaries on extramural grants.

According to the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research—of which ASN is a member—“NIH-funded research is driving the transformation of the practice of medicine. At a time of unparalleled scientific opportunities and unprecedented health challenges, NIH must be given the resources to continue to move forward, not stand in place.”

ASN is a not-for-profit organization of 11,000 physicians and scientists dedicated to the study of nephrology and committed to providing a forum for the promulgation of information regarding the latest research and clinical findings on kidney diseases. ASN is a member of the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Steering Committee. The Ad Hoc Group is a coalition in support of increased funding for the National Institutes of Health.