Sequestration Still Looms Large

**OMB Estimates $2.5 Billion NIH Cut**

Congress recessed for the elections without taking any action to avoid the sequester. On September 14, the OMB issued the report mandated by the Sequestration Transparency Act (STA, P.L. 112-155) on the potential impact, noting that actual results could differ based on further guidance.

Under the assumptions required by the STA, the sequestration would result in a 9.4 percent reduction in non-exempt defense discretionary funding and an 8.2 percent reduction in non-exempt nondefense discretionary funding. The sequestration would also impose cuts of 2.0 percent to Medicare, 7.6 percent to other non-exempt nondefense mandatory programs, and 10.0 percent to non-exempt defense mandatory programs.

For NIH, the report states that $30.711 billion would be subject to the 8.2 percent sequester, equal to $2.518 billion, and an additional $150 million in mandatory budget authority (for diabetes research) would be subject to a 7.6 percent cut, equal to $11 million. The total cut to NIH would equal $2.529 billion, which is greater than the $2.4 billion (or 7.8 percent cut) initially estimated by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). An 8.2 percent cut to NEI’s FY2012 funding level of $702.7 million would result in a $57.6 million cut.

In discussing the impact of the sequester, OMB notes, “The NIH would have to halt or curtail scientific research, including needed research into cancer and childhood diseases.”

**Sequester “Devastating to NIH”**

From the late March House and Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee hearings to the June meeting of the House Energy and Commerce Committee with authorizing jurisdiction over NIH, as well as at all NIH Advisory Committee meetings, Dr. Collins has been consistent in describing the sequester as a “dark cloud on the horizon.” He has especially cautioned legislators about the impact on new and competing grants, since NIH is already financially committed to an extensive portfolio of ongoing grants.

**NAEV R Rallies Against Sequestration**

NAEV R and ARVO joined nearly 3,000 other organizations as signatories on a July 12 Nondefense Discretionary (NDD) Coalition letter to Congress and the Administration urging leaders to avert sequestration by adopting a “balanced approach to deficit reduction that does not include further cuts to NDD programs.” NAEVR has also organized the vision research community to email letters from the Contact Congress section of its Web site to their Members, urging them to avoid sequestration. NAEVR will also urge attendees at the late-October American Academy of Optometry Annual meeting in Phoenix to do so from the NAEVR Central booth.

On July 25, NAEVR joined its colleagues from the education, health, and research communities at the Rally to Restore Balance and Protect America’s Families, which was sponsored by the NDD and hosted by Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA). Earlier that day, he released the first comprehensive report on the impact of sequestration on programs within his Subcommittee’s jurisdiction entitled Under Threat−Sequestration’s Impact on Nondefense Jobs and Services. Senator Harkin was joined by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), a member of the Senate LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee, Cong. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), the Ranking Member of the House LHHS Appropriations Subcommittee, and Cong. George Miller (D-CA), the Ranking Member of the House Education and Workforce Committee. The speakers urged their colleagues in Congress to work on a balanced and bipartisan alternative to sequestration that does not impose an undue burden on nondefense discretionary spending and does not put an additional burden on the middle class.

**Bipartisan Members Express Concerns**

At a September 20 press conference held by Research!America and United for Medical Research, Congs. Ed Markey (D-MA) and Brian Bilbray (R-CA) spoke about the high priority the nation must place on NIH, as well as a recent national public opinion poll showing that 51 percent of Americans say that across-the-board budget cuts are not the right way to reduce the deficit.

Research!America President Mary Woolley spoke about latest polling data Cong. Brian Bilbray (R-CA) emphasized the importance of NIH