

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

Office of Public Affairs

Rockville, MD 20852 Fax: 301.881.2080

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Contact: Benjamin Corb
240.283.6625 (office)
202.841.2701 (cell)
bcorb@asbmb.org

BIOCHEMISTRY SOCIETY OPPOSES FIRST ACT

ROCKVILLE, MD – The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, an organization representing more than 12,000 scientists in the United States and globally, opposes the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science and Technology Act of 2013. The Act, introduced by Rep. Larry Bucshon, R-Ind., and Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas, of the U.S. House Science, Space and Technology committee, is a reauthorization of the National Science Foundation meant to replace the expiring America COMPETES Act. However, the new bill contains too many flaws and unnecessary riders to warrant the support of the ASBMB.

“The FIRST Act is not good for the NSF, is not good for our members and is not good for science in general,” said Benjamin Corb, public affairs director for the ASBMB. “While it is clear that Chairman Smith, Rep. Bucshon and the Science, Space and Technology committee majority worked hard to improve this bill, they clearly did not fully understand the concerns of the scientific community with regard to reauthorizing the NSF.

A discussion draft of the FIRST Act was distributed this past November and was opposed by the ASBMB and many other scientific societies. This draft contained many onerous provisions affecting merit review and grant application procedures at the Foundation. After a hearing and several meetings with advocates for the scientific community, the SST majority rewrote major sections of the bill. However, many of the unacceptable provisions either remain or are redundant with existing NSF policies and procedures. Additionally, the FIRST Act’s one-year authorization for NSF is a break from previous reauthorization bills, which authorized spending at the NSF for at least three years.

In introducing the FIRST Act, Chairman Smith and Rep. Bucshon released statements that, among other things, expressed concern about America’s role as a global leader in scientific research. Rep. Bucshon said, “[The FIRST Act] prioritizes and funds research important to maintain America’s competitiveness in the global economy.” Chairman Smith said, “To remain globally competitive, we need to make sure our priorities are funded and that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.”

“The ASBMB is concerned about America’s place in the global research endeavor,” said Corb. “But the FIRST Act does not provide the long-term vision, funding or stability required to keep the U.S. at the forefront of global research. Scientific research has proven itself time and again as a worthy investment of taxpayer dollars. This is why, even in times of budget austerity, the NSF and other research agencies need long-term, predictable and sustainable increases in funding to ensure America is producing the best science and maintaining its role as a global research leader.”

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