



ACNP Bulletin

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ACNP Liaison Committee Members Attend “Hill Day” with SfN

Capitol “Hill Day” is the hallmark advocacy event of the year. SfN members from across the country convene on Capitol Hill to meet with their congressional representatives to discuss advances in the field of neuroscience, share the economic and public health benefits of investment in biomedical research, and make the case for strong national investment in scientific research through NIH and NSF. Scientists know better than anyone that scientific progress cannot happen without an adequate predictable stream of public funding. But members of congress, who decide how much money will be spent on science, need to know what scientists know. Hill Day is an opportunity for scientists to meet face-to-face with lawmakers to share their expertise and put a human face to decisions about research funding. These meetings lay the groundwork for getting lawmakers into the lab, meeting with them when they return to their districts, and becoming a resource to their staff when they make important decisions about research funding.

This year, Liaison Committee members Kristin Bigos, Ph.D., Christopher Cowan, Ph.D., and Rebecca Knickmeyer-Santelli, Ph.D., joined forces with SfN members on Thursday, March 23rd

to help deliver the message about the importance of brain science across the research continuum. This year, SfN focused on strategically critical congressional districts as part of advancing SfN's message on the Hill.

The visit to Capitol Hill started off with a breakfast where they were addressed by Representative Earl Blumenauer (OR), who reminded them that they were on the Hill on a historic day when the House was scheduled to vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which in his opinion was the greatest medical advancement of the 21st century. Current SfN president, Dr. Eric Nestler, reminded the group that mental illnesses are the greatest cause of disability in the USA.

The Liaison Committee members along with SfN members met with congressional representatives to discuss the advances in the field of neuroscience, share the economic and public health benefits of investment in biomedical research, and made the case for a strong national investment in scientific research through NIH and NSF. The Liaison Committee members gave a three to five-minute layperson's summary of their brain research, an introduction of the ACNP, our mission/availability, and then they presented the official monetary "asks". They pushed different angles, including the economic benefits of public supported research, the dearth of basic research in industry requiring an investment by public funds, the need for sustainable funding for biomedical research pipeline in terms of encouraging the next generation of scientists seeing the funding instability and for discovering the next disease causes, treatments and cures, etc.

Dr. Christopher Cowan along with SfN members met with Representative Jim Clyburn, Senator Jeff Merkley, Senator Ron Wyden and Congressman Earl Blumenauer who were clearly supportive of NIH/NSF research and the Brain initiative. Their "ask" for the meetings was a \$2B increase in the FY17 NIH budget (already slated for a \$2B increase from the current \$32B budget in FY16, so the final ask is really for an increase to \$36B), a \$8B budget for NSF and to release the pre-approved funds for the Brain initiative which was part of the 21st Century Cures Act, but the funds are not yet released and might be considered as part of the future NIH/NSF budgets by some in Congress.

Dr. Kristin Bigo's was accompanied by SfN Executive Director Marty Saggese, SfN president-elect Dr. Rick Haganir, SfN member Dr. Marshall Hussain Shuler, Georgetown graduate student Brittany Aguilar, and SfN Federal Advocacy Manager Cece Grant. Their group met with staff from the offices of Representative John Sarbanes (MD), Senator Ben Cardin (MD), Senator Chris Van Hollen (MD), and Representative Eleanor H. Norton (DC). They advocated for NIH and NSF funding, which was well supported by all the members of Congress with whom they met. They were encouraged to hear that NIH and NSF funding is a bipartisan issue and is largely supported across both parties.

Dr. Rebecca Santelli-Knickmeyer along with SfN members met with Congressman David Price (NC) as well as Staffers from the Offices of Senator Tim Kaine (VA), Senator Mark Warner (VA), Offices of Senator Richard Burr (NC), Offices of Congressional Representatives Virginia Fox (NC) and Bob Goodlatte (VA).

More than 40 SfN members along with ACNP Liaison Committee members participated in the successful Capitol Hill Day and met with more than 54 congressional offices to advocate for scientific research.

