

Grassroots Toolkit

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FAQs

What is the Rally for Medical Research Hill Day and who is participating?

The Rally for Medical Research Hill Day will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2015. More than [300 national organizations and institutions](#) are supporting this event by either sending representatives to Washington, DC or engaging in grassroots activities through the National “Day of Action.” The Hill Day event will unite passionate advocates from across the medical research advocacy community to urge Congress to make funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a national priority and to thank Members of Congress for their willingness to explore innovative ways to increase the NIH budget. This effort will raise awareness about the critical need for robust, sustainable, and predictable budget increases for the NIH in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and beyond to improve health, spur more progress, inspire more hope and save more lives.

For those who aren’t able to travel to Washington to participate, September 17 will be a grassroots “Day of Action,” during which advocates will be encouraged to call or email their members of Congress to urge support for NIH funding.

What is the goal of the event?

Federal funding for medical research continues to be in serious jeopardy, threatening the future health of millions of Americans and people around the world. The goal of the Rally for Medical Research Hill Day is to speak with a unified voice to House and Senate offices on Capitol Hill about the importance of investing in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to improve the health and economic well-being of our nation.

What is the role of the grassroots networks?

Grassroots activities of scientists, clinicians, survivors and other advocates from across the country will play a key role in the success and reach of the Hill Day because only a small percentage of those involved will be in Washington, DC on September 17. Given the millions of

Americans who are represented through the participating organizations, the effort presents a tremendous opportunity to send a powerful, coordinated message to Capitol Hill.

Grassroots efforts will build toward and center around September 17, which will be designated a “Day of Action to Rally for Medical Research.” Participating organizations will be provided with a simple, customizable, action-oriented message that can be sent to their members and volunteers. Advocates will be asked to take specific actions on September 17, including:

- Send an email (action alert) to or call congressional offices,
- Tweet members of Congress with a message or post on the member’s Facebook page,
- Write letters to the editor and place op-eds in newspapers across the country in September

Suggested Timeline for Coordinated Action

- Sept. 2: Announce the upcoming Rally “Day of Action”

- Sept. 9: Remind your network about the “Day of Action” with links to on-line tools and tips
 - These will include email templates and sample tweets.
We will have a link to the online portal where you can send a note directly to Congress.

- Sept. 16: Remind your networks again to take action on Sept. 17

- Sept. 17: “Day of Action” to Rally for Medical Research!

Key Messages

- Now is the time for Congress to Work Together to Support the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Invest in Medical Research!
- Thank Members of Congress for their support for the NIH and for their willingness to explore innovative ways to increase the NIH budget.
- Ask Congress to increase funding for the NIH with budget increases that are robust, sustainable and predictable in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and beyond.
- Ask Members of Congress to agree on a new budget framework that supports stronger investments in the NIH.

Additional Talking Points

- Medical research funded through the NIH, the largest source of funding for medical research in the world, has been a driving force behind many decades of advances that have improved the health of people in every corner of America.
- Thanks in part to NIH-funded research, Americans are living longer, healthier lives and advances that were once unimaginable, such as sequencing the human genome, have been achieved and have opened a world of unprecedented opportunities for science, medicine and health.
- We can do much more with a robust, predictable and sustained investment in medical research. Americans are getting older and chronic diseases consume the vast majority of

our health care dollars. We can meet these challenges head-on, but in order to do so, medical research must be a strong national priority.

- The funding provided to the NIH does more than just save lives – it fuels the U.S. economy and creates jobs in our communities. NIH funding supports research by 300,000 researchers at more than 2,500 universities, research institutions, small businesses and other entities across the U.S. Every \$1 in NIH funding generates about \$2.21 in local economic growth.
- Across-the-board cuts, known as sequestration, which took effect on March 2013, slashed the NIH budget by \$1.6 billion. These cuts came after a decade of stagnant funding, during which time the NIH lost nearly \$6 billion (20 percent) in purchasing power because funding has not kept pace with the rate of biomedical inflation.
- NIH funding remains below pre-sequestration levels. In FY 2015, the NIH received a \$400 million (1.3%) increase over FY 2014 post-sequester levels, bringing the level of funding to approximately \$30.3 billion. However, the new funding level still falls more than \$400 million short of restoring the \$1.6 billion that was cut in March 2013 when sequestration took effect.
- We cannot allow flat funding or worse, additional budget cuts, to undermine progress in medical research at a time when we are on the cusp of exciting new advances in cancer, infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s and many other diseases.
- If Congress fails to make NIH funding a national priority, thousands of researchers across the country will be at serious risk of losing research grant funding, and with it the ability to carry out lifesaving research. Success rates already have reached 17 percent—a

historic low--which means we could be leaving the next breakthrough or cure on the table.

- As a result of decreased investment in NIH, a whole generation of younger scientists will be without the public funding they need at a significant stage in their careers, and these individuals will be lost to other careers or other countries, depleting our talent pool and delaying or forfeiting research opportunities for investigators and patients in the U.S.

Sample Action Alert

Act Now to Urge Congress to Invest in the National Institutes of Health

Dear Representative/Senator:

I am writing to urge you to support robust, sustainable, and predictable increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Fiscal year (FY) 2016 and beyond. Furthermore, I urge you to ensure a bipartisan solution to overcome the challenges that could potentially jeopardize the increases for NIH from taking effect.

Robust and predictable funding for NIH is critical if the agency is to continue to serve as the world's preeminent medical research institution and our best hope for finding cures, improving treatments, and gaining a better understanding of the complex causes of diseases that affect millions of Americans. The agency conducts important research that has led to major advancements in our understanding of rare diseases and disorders, as well as historically prevalent diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, and Parkinson's.

Moreover, an unwavering investment in the NIH continues to pay significant dividends in the form of lives saved, decreased economic impact of disease, and increased innovation, global competitiveness, and economic growth.

But over the past decade, we have seen the budgets of these key funding and regulatory agencies decline significantly, resulting in fewer grants funded, a reduction in funding for existing grants, and an untold number of meritorious, innovative proposals left on the table. At a time of such opportunity such as the one we have in the area of precision medicine, this is not the time for the NIH and NCI budgets to be in retreat.

We truly live in an extraordinary time, when the scientific opportunities and our ability to translate new knowledge of the human genome into ways to both save and improve the quality of life of patients are simply astounding. If we are to support and foster the goals of precision medicine, including the development of therapeutics that treat the underlying causes of disease and the delivery of these therapies to the individuals who will benefit from them, a strong commitment to funding medical research is required. Therefore, I call upon you to provide predictable and sustainable increases for the NIH for FY2016.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

Sample Tweets

On Twitter, please follow the Rally @RallyForNIH and use the hashtag #RallyMedRes.

Remember, your tweets are helpful to mobilize your network and promote the Rally. In addition, tweets can attract the attention of policymakers when they see their Twitter handles appear. For a complete list of members and their Twitter handles as well as other social media accounts, please see these [House](#) and [Senate](#) lists.

Below are sample tweets and templates to consider:

Template

- *[insert member Twitter handle]* Please invest in the NIH for the health & economic security of our nation. #RallyMedRes

Sample

- @SenShelby - Please invest in the NIH for the health & economic security of our nation. #RallyMedRes

Other Tweet Suggestions (*links to Rally Website*)

If you'd prefer to use your own URL shortener, please use this URL:

http://rallyformedicalresearch.org/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=tweet&utm_content=grassroots_campaign=9-18-13hillday

Every \$1 of NIH funding generates about \$2.21 in local economic growth

<http://ow.ly/omlvn> #RallyMedRes

Source: Adapted from materials developed by the Coalition for Health Funding and NDD United and available at http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/

#IRallyFor Selfie Campaign

Participants at the Rally as well as folks participating in the Day of Action from home are encouraged to post a selfie to social media platforms (particularly Facebook and Twitter) that reads “#IRallyfor _____ research” to promote their personal connection to the Rally for Medical Research. Branded templates will be made available in participant folders, Congressional leave-behind folders, as well as being made available as a printable resource on the Resources page of the Rally website.

National Call-In Day

Call Alert

Hello, my name is [FIRST] _____ [LAST] _____. I am from [YOUR CITY & STATE] and am calling to support the hundreds of people in Washington today who are attending the Rally for Medical Research Hill Day.

- I urge Representative or Senator [LAST NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE] to support the nation's investment in medical research.
- To that end, please increase funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) so that we do not jeopardize the progress we have made in saving and improving the lives of millions of Americans.
- As someone who has been touched by [state the disease], we cannot allow flat funding or worse, additional budget cuts, to undermine progress in medical research at a time when we are on the cusp of exciting new advances in cancer, infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's and many other diseases.

Sample Facebook Posts

The Rally for Medical Research is now on Facebook (www.facebook.com/RallyMedRes).

Be sure to “like” and follow the Rally, and we encourage you to also post to your own Facebook pages and to the pages of members of Congress. When adding a link to your post, please delete the URL’s text from the post once Facebook automatically adds a link preview.

- I am someone/I have a loved one who is affected by [insert disease]. That’s why federal support of medical research is so important to me. Congress should invest in the NIH for the health and economic security of our nation, so join me and @[insert your organization here] in taking action today.

http://rallyformedicalresearch.org/?utm_source=fb&utm_medium=wall&utm_content=grassroots_campaign=9-18-13hillday

- We have much to lose and nothing to gain by federal decision making that stalls U.S. medical progress, in [disease] research and other areas. Tell Congress: We Need Cures, Not Cuts.

http://rallyformedicalresearch.org/?utm_source=fb&utm_medium=wall&utm_content=grassroots_campaign=9-18-13hillday

- Medical research is important to me because [insert personal reason here]. That’s why I’m joining the @[organization name] to rally for medical research and urge Congress invest in the NIH! Learn more at

http://rallyformedicalresearch.org/?utm_source=fb&utm_medium=wall&utm_content=grassroots_campaign=9-18-13hillday

Sample Letter to the Editor and Op-Ed

[DATE]

To the Editor:

First way to start the letter: I want to thank Rep [] and or Senator [] for his/her continued and strong support for biomedical research funding).

A second way to start the letter: As the Congress continues to work on many challenging budget issues, I urge Representative [YOUR REPRESENTATIVE'S NAME HERE] and Senators [YOUR SENATORS' NAMES HERE] to support robust funding for the National Institutes of Health.

Body of the text: NIH research funding is an investment in our country's future. The funds are used to support the development of treatments and cures for a wide range of diseases and conditions. In addition, it supports talented scientists in every state—including this one—who every day are working discovering critical medical breakthroughs.

Insert: Personal story

Full funding for NIH is critical if the agency is to continue to serve as the world's preeminent medical research institution and our best hope for finding cures, improving treatments, and gaining a better understanding of the complex causes of diseases that affect millions of Americans. The agency conducts research that is too expensive and risky for private industry to undertake alone but has led to major advancements in our understanding of rare diseases and disorders, as well as historically prevalent diseases like Alzheimer's, cancer, and Parkinson's.

I will be watching for our congressional delegation's leadership on this issue.

Source: Adapted from a sample Letter to the Editor created by the Coalition for the Life Sciences and available at www.coalitionforlifesciences.org

Op-Ed: We need cures, not cuts

Federal funding for medical research, coupled with private-sector innovation, has revolutionized medicine in this country and throughout the world. HIV is no longer a death sentence, polio has been virtually eradicated, and we now have vaccines and antivirals that reduce hospitalizations from the flu and dangerous flu-related infections. We are closer than ever to a universal flu vaccine. [Insert Personal Story]

There's no question that a strong investment in medical research reaps significant benefits for patients and future generations. Yet, agencies that fund research such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have seen their budgets slashed by more than 5 percent as a result of the recent implementation of automatic, across-the-board cuts known as sequestration—cuts that invariably will compromise efforts to prevent and combat disease. Policymakers can rethink these cuts and address deficit reduction in a pragmatic, rather than expedient manner.

The question is, will they? Patients are dying to know.

This isn't just a health issue; it's an economic one. In 2011 alone, research produced \$62 billion in new economic activity and led to the creation of more than 430,000 jobs. In this challenging climate, continued budget cuts will result in job loss at research universities, medical schools and independent research institutes, as well as in the device, drug and biologics industries and the thousands of businesses that support our nation's research enterprise. [Insert examples]

We risk losing our position as a global leader in R&D if federal funding continues to decline. China, for example, recognizes the importance of research to economic growth and population health and has already made significant efforts to strengthen policies and investments. At the same time, U.S. investment is stagnating, and now cuts to research have gone into effect. We

cannot take our current leadership position for granted. We need to work vigorously to invest in the research infrastructure to attract talent and private-sector investments.

Medical research is fundamental to our health and economic prosperity. A lackluster commitment from Congress and the failure to make NIH funding a national priority will jeopardize efforts to strengthen our research infrastructure and eliminate current and emerging health threats. We need cures, not cuts.

Source: Adapted from a sample Op-ed developed by Research!America and available at www.SaveResearch.org