

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH HEARING ON "NIH REFORM ACT OF 2006: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND NEXT STEPS"

I commend Subcommittee Chairman Pallone for holding this hearing today. In the 109th Congress, under the Chairmanship of my good friend Joe Barton, this Committee worked in a bipartisan and diligent fashion to move legislation which reauthorized and reorganized the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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September 9, 2008

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I commend Subcommittee Chairman Pallone for holding this hearing today. In the 109th Congress, under the Chairmanship of my good friend Joe Barton, this Committee worked in a bipartisan and diligent fashion to move legislation which reauthorized and reorganized the National Institutes of Health (NIH). When Congress passed, and the President subsequently signed into law, the "NIH Reform Act of 2006", it was only the third omnibus reauthorization in NIH's history.

Passage of the "NIH Reform Act of 2006" was a major accomplishment for the Congress and was achieved, thanks in large part to the dedicated work of Representative Barton. It was my sincere pleasure to work with Representative Barton and his staff on that legislation.

As with any major legislation, it is important that the Committee of jurisdiction exercise its responsibility to oversee and evaluate the programs and activities created. That is why I am so pleased that the Subcommittee on Health is examining the implementation of the "NIH Reform Act of 2006". And I welcome Dr. Zerhouni, Director of the NIH, who has been an invaluable resource to the Committee. Thank you, Dr. Zerhouni.

The "NIH Reform Act of 2006" enhanced the authority and tools available to the NIH Director's Office to conduct strategic planning and to facilitate and fund trans-disciplinary, cross-Institute research initiatives. In addition, the law created more budgetary, organizational, and programmatic transparency at the NIH and standardized data and information management systems.

Although

this law was a significant step in the right direction, the NIH still faces many hurdles. Challenges facing the agency — such as attracting and keeping young scientists, creating opportunities for trans-disciplinary research that cut across Institute boundaries, and managing the portfolio of extramural and intramural research — are only being compounded by insufficient funding.

After

years of significant funding increases for NIH in its fight against disease, this Administration has consistently chosen to flat fund or decrease NIH's budget. For instance, the President's FY2009 budget requested a decrease of \$5 million below the FY2008 program level. This budget decrease could significantly harm the country's principal medical research agency. This is simply unacceptable.

I look forward to hearing Dr. Zerhouni's testimony about the implementation of the NIH Reform Act and I welcome his views about how to respond to challenges that lie ahead.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515