

Year in Review: 2006

Welcome From the Chair, Gilbert S. Omenn, and the CEO, Alan I. Leshner



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Polio was still paralyzing an average of 1,000 children per day in 1988, when the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, Rotary International, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control spearheaded the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Even after the year 2000 — eradication deadline — polio persists in four countries.

As debate over the best public-health response intensified in 2006, Nicholas Grassly of Imperial College London and colleagues published an optimistic analysis in *Science*, and participated in a related press conference organized by AAAS. “The

world must not give up on eradicating polio,” Grassly and his coauthors announced. “Finishing the job is very important.”

The press conference at London’s Science Media Centre was one of many AAAS efforts in 2006 to help address global challenges by communicating peer-reviewed research and by raising awareness of key science, technology, and education issues. The Association also continued to provide authoritative, nonpartisan information to guide U.S. science and security policy; cradle-to-grave support for science careers; and assistance for researchers worldwide who are working together toward common goals.

The most urgent, formidable challenges of the modern era — from persistent diseases and unimaginable poverty, to melting ice sheets, affronts to science education, and the threat of avian influenza — will not easily be resolved. But, the innovative, responsible use of science and technology continues to promise new opportunities for improving human welfare, international security, and economic prosperity.

AAAS contributions to public discourse in 2006 included letters to policy-makers, opinion essays in local newspapers, and major public events such as “Evolution on the Front Line,” a town hall-style forum focusing on the teaching of evolution. Some 500 teachers, scientists, and members of the public participated in the town hall as part of the AAAS Annual Meeting in St. Louis.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the Association’s strategy to communicate global issues at the local level — an approach dubbed “glocal” — AAAS placed opinion pieces in newspapers ranging from the *San Francisco Chronicle* to the *Wichita Eagle*. When U.S. policy-makers were evaluating the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, for example, AAAS wrote to the U.S. Senate and to the *Washington Post*, noting that human embryonic stem cells hold “the greatest therapeutic promise” as possible replacement cells for those with diabetes, spinal cord injuries, and Parkinson and Alzheimer diseases. In the midst of a major partisan power shift within the U.S. House and Senate, AAAS also urged lawmakers to

pass 2007 research-spending bills, and to invest in mathematics and science education, energy technologies, and R&D tax credits to enhance innovation and workforce preparation for a prosperous economic future.

On other fronts, the science-education reform activities of Project 2061 remained a central focus of AAAS contributions in 2006, along with expanding resources on *ScienceCareers.org* and fostering cooperation among researchers, from the Middle East to Asia and Africa. AAAS science-education leadership earned special recognition when Shirley Malcom, head of Education and Human Resources, and AAAS Past President Leon Lederman were tapped to co-chair the National Science Board's Commission on 21st Century Education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. At the same time, the AAAS Center for Science, Technology, and Security Policy continues to provide policy-makers with authoritative technical advice on such critical issues as safeguarding ports and missile detection.

Read more on pages 4–5 about AAAS efforts to serve as a voice of scientific leadership on our rapidly advancing knowledge about evolution, the urgency of moderating global climate change, the need for research funding, and the importance of free and open communication among scientists. Other pages highlight a diverse spectrum of AAAS contributions to science policy, security, education, careers, international cooperation, and public engagement with science and technology.

As we reflect upon AAAS contributions in 2006, we remain grateful for members, donors, and others who support scientific and engineering innovations to improve the lives of people everywhere. We applaud all those who recognize and work to seize the great opportunities within every grand challenge, the AAAS theme for 2006 (see *Science*, 15 December 2006; 314:1696–1704).



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