

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

AAAS Government Relations helps connect the science community with U.S. lawmakers through Capitol Hill briefings and events. Those events and periodic publications ensure that scientists' expert input on pressing issues reaches policymakers and key Congressional staff members. Providing such evidence-based science and technology expertise improves the level of understanding and sophistication with which governmental decisions are made.



WORKING WITH CONGRESS: A SCIENTIST'S GUIDE TO POLICY

This book's 2011 edition provides scientists with expert advice on how to communicate with policymakers, including which route of communication is best suited to a particular issue, whom to contact and when, what to do to prepare, and how to follow up. A companion Web site offers important updates. "With Congress looking for ways to reduce the deficit by decreasing discretionary spending, now more than ever it is critical for scientists to communicate to policymakers on why R&D is a crucial investment and why their research matters," said Joanne Carney, director of AAAS Government Relations.

R&D FUNDING ANALYSIS GUIDES POLICY

The AAAS R&D Budget and Policy Program provided critical analysis of federal funding of R&D through public presentations such as a Congressional briefing in April 2011, and constantly updated online analyses of relevant appropriations processes. Such comprehensive accounting spurred AAAS to speak up throughout the year to preserve federal R&D funding in a climate of drastic budget-cutting, emphasizing R&D's role as a catalyst for economic growth.

"Over 50% of U.S. economic growth since World War II has come from science and technology," said AAAS CEO Alan I. Leshner, executive publisher of *Science*, at a Congressional event. "The return on investment for academic scientific research is best estimated at around 28%."

For more information on AAAS's statements regarding federal funding, see pages 4-6.

Matt Hourihan was named director of the R&D Budget and Policy Program in December 2011. Prior to joining AAAS, Hourihan tracked federal investment in energy R&D and innovation activities for the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation.

NEUROSCIENCE AND SOCIETY EVENTS

A series of Capitol Hill briefings focused broadly on the topic of neuroscience. The first, on the military's involvement in neuroscience and neurotechnology research, explored such exciting advances as the ability to restore injured patients' ability to move and speak using neural signals transmitted to a computer. The second session provided a range of scientific perspectives on research related to possible links between cell phones and brain tumors. (Studies thus far have shown no consistent link, experts said.) Headlining the third event were the latest discoveries, diagnostic tools and treatments in traumatic brain injury, which is suffered by 1.7 million Americans each year. All three briefings were sponsored by the Dana Foundation, which awarded a second grant to continue the series in 2012.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH EVENTS

Varied briefings organized by the AAAS Office of Government Relations brought top science experts together with Congressional staffers and other interested parties to delve into such urgent topics as stem cell research and climate change. Periodic events focused on the impact of climate change on U.S. water resources, crop yields and the incidence of extreme weather.

At one of several events co-sponsored by AAAS and other organizations such as the American Meteorological Society, climate experts considered the potential of geoengineering—or large-scale engineering of the environment such as by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere—to mitigate climate change.

AAAS also co-organized the first official Climate Science Day on Capitol Hill. Climate scientists representing many disciplines came to Washington to visit Congressional offices with the aim of increasing dialogue between scientists and policymakers.



The U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, the Veteran's Administration and others are exploring whether neural signals can drive a new generation of advanced, dextrous prosthetics like the DEKA robotic arm. Promising neuroscience-based technologies were the focus of three AAAS briefings in 2011. [Image courtesy of DEKA Research & Development.]



U.S. Representatives Judy Biggert (R-Illinois) and Rush Holt (D-New Jersey) attended the April 2011 briefing where AAAS provided its analysis of the federal R&D budget.