

## Grassroots Toolkit

### Table of Contents

FAQs.....	2
Suggested Timeline for Coordinated Action .....	4
Key Messages.....	4
Additional Background .....	7
Sample Action Alert Email/Letter .....	8
Sample Tweets.....	11
Sample Facebook Posts .....	12
#IRallyFor Selfie Campaign.....	13
Sample Text Messages.....	13
Sample Letter to the Editor .....	14
Sample Op-Ed .....	15

FAQs

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

The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Rally for Medical Research Hill Day will be held on Thursday, September 17, 2020 as an entirely virtual event. Approximately [350 national organizations and institutions](#) are supporting this event and will have advocates participating in virtual meetings with congressional offices and/or engaging in grassroots activities. The virtual Hill Day event will unite advocates from across the country and across the medical research advocacy community to urge Congress to continue to make funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) a national priority and to thank Members of Congress for their extraordinary support for the NIH over the last five years. This effort will raise awareness about the critical need for robust, sustained, and predictable funding increases for the NIH in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 and beyond to improve health, spur more progress, inspire more hope and save more lives.

We encourage those who cannot participate in the virtual meetings to use an action alert and other grassroots resources that will be posted on the Rally website at <http://rallyformedicalresearch.org>. September 17 will be grassroots “National Day of Action” during which advocates will be encouraged to contact their members of Congress via email or social media to urge support for NIH funding.

**What is the goal of the event?**

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 NIH to improve the health and economic security of our nation.

**What is the role of the grassroots networks?**

Networks of patients, scientists, survivors, clinicians, students and other advocates across the country will play a key role in the success and reach of the Hill Day. 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.

We encourage organizations from across the medical research advocacy community to engage their grassroots network on September 17 in a “National Day of Action.” 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 such as:

- Send an email to congressional offices
- Tweet at 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

- Today: Tell your network about the National Day of Action with links to online tools and tips, including the Rally Resources page
- Sept. 16: Remind your networks again to take action on Thurs., Sept. 17
- Sept. 17: National Day of Action coinciding with the virtual Rally for Medical Research Hill Day

## 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 providing five straight years of robust funding increases for the NIH, including an increase of \$2.6 billion in FY 2020, and for recognizing NIH is playing a vital role in the COVID-19 response. We are grateful for Congress members' sustained efforts to make funding medical research a national priority, and we ask them to continue this momentum in FY 2021.
  - Urge Congress to provide the NIH with at least \$44.7 billion (a \$3 billion increase) to the base budget in FY 2021. This funding is essential to support the opportunities for life-saving medical research that we have today and maintain momentum from previous investments.



- Urge Congress to exempt NIH from the highly restrictive FY 2021 budget caps to allow the lifesaving agency to forcefully respond to the COVID-19 health crisis, as well as to support the science that is necessary to improve and save lives from the myriad of other diseases faced by Americans and by people all over the world.
  - Urge Congress to provide at least \$15.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding for NIH in the next COVID-19 relief package to support the wide range of medical research that has been stalled or lost due to the pandemic, as well as ongoing research on COVID-19 itself.
- **NIH funding is important to the health of patients across the country, scientific advances, new treatments and cures, and to the strength of our national, regional, and local economies.**
- 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 large 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.

- NIH funding contributed to every one of the 210 new drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) between 2010 and 2016, including 84 first-in-class products to treat a wide range of diseases.<sup>1</sup>
- Investment in medical research can limit future costs of care. The vast majority of our health care dollars are spent on treating chronic diseases that could be managed more effectively with better therapies or, in some cases, prevented. 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. In FY 2019, research funded by the NIH supported nearly 476,000 jobs and more than \$81 billion in economic activity across the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ekaterina Galkina Cleary, Jennifer M. Beierlein, Navleen Surjit Khanuja, Laura M. McNamee, and Fred D. Ledley. Contribution of NIH funding to new drug approvals 2010–2016. PNAS March 6, 2018 115 (10) 2329-2334; first published February 12, 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1715368115>

<sup>2</sup> United for Medical Research. NIH's Role in Sustaining the U.S. Economy 2020 Update.

<https://www.unitedformedicalresearch.org/reports/nihs-role-in-sustaining-the-u-s-economy/>

Additional Background

- In December of 2019, Congress passed, and the President signed a Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriations package that included \$41.6 billion for NIH, an increase of \$2.6 billion over FY 2019 appropriations.
- On July 31, 2020, the House passed a package of FY 2021 appropriations bills that included an increase of \$500 million in annual appropriations for the NIH, and \$5 billion in emergency funding for NIH in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Senate has not yet considered appropriations bills for FY 2021.
- NIH funding has been included in three of the four emergency supplemental funding packages passed by Congress this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of this funding is designated to research on COVID-19 specifically.

Sample Action Alert Email/Letter

Dear Senator/Representative [Last Name]:

I applaud you and your colleagues in Congress for working in a bipartisan fashion to provide strong funding increases for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the last five years, including an increase of \$2.6 billion in FY 2020. I am writing to respectfully request that you and your fellow members of Congress continue the momentum of robust, sustained and predictable funding growth by supporting a final FY 2021 spending bill that provides at least a \$3 billion increase in funding for the NIH, for a total funding level of \$44.7 billion. I also ask that you urge House and Senate leadership to complete work on the FY 2021 spending bill as quickly as possible to avoid the delays and disruptions caused by continuing resolutions.

As you may know, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to medical research across the country, as labs have been forced to close, clinical trials have been halted, and resources have been diverted to support the immediate needs of responding to this public health crisis. Emergency funding for medical research is urgently needed to avoid losing ground on breakthroughs for hundreds of diseases such as diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer, and many others, as well as to continue research on COVID-19 treatments and vaccines. I therefore urge you and your colleagues to include at least \$15.5 billion in emergency supplemental

funds for the NIH in the next COVID-19 response package to address these critical needs.

NIH-funded research means hope for millions of Americans and their families who are affected by illnesses such as diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer and hundreds of other diseases. Robust, predictable and sustained funding for the NIH is an investment necessary to pursue our nation's commitment to lifesaving treatments, sustain our nation's global leadership in medical research, and remain competitive in today's economy.

We truly live in an extraordinary time, when the scientific opportunities are limitless, and our ability to translate new knowledge of the human genome into ways to both save and improve the quality of life of patients is simply astounding. In fact, we have never been better positioned to seize the unprecedented opportunities to bring hope to millions of patients and their loved ones everywhere.

I know that Congress continues to face difficult budget decisions between many competing priorities, but I believe Congress can do no better than to invest in the lifesaving research made possible through NIH funding. On behalf of the millions of patients, survivors, their families and other loved ones, I call upon you and your colleagues to work in a bipartisan manner to support an increase of \$3 billion in NIH funding for FY 2021, and to include at least \$15.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding for the NIH in the next COVID-19 relief package.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure our nation's health and economy will prosper for many years to come.

Thank you for your consideration of my views.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

### Sample Tweets

**On Twitter, please use the hashtag #RallyMedRes and, if there is space, #FundNIH.** Remember, these tweets are helpful to not only mobilize your network and promote the Rally, but tweets can also gain the attention of policymakers as they see their Twitter handles appear in our tweets.

Below are sample tweets to consider:

- Dear [@CongressMember], please invest in the NIH for the health & economic security of our nation. RallyForMedicalResearch.org  
#RallyMedRes #FundNIH
- Research means hope! Join #RallyMedRes from anywhere in the US by participating in the National Day of Action at Rallyformedicalresearch.org
- Thanks [@CongressMember] for your commitment to medical research! Grateful to have your support for @NIH funding. #RallyMedRes #FundNIH
- #NIH research is the basis for countless treatments, therapies, and cures. Sustained, predictable funding growth ensures that we can continue to provide hope for millions of patients battling life-threatening and chronic conditions. #RallyMedRes #FundNIH
- Today's science could lead to a breakthrough treatment for a chronic or life-threatening condition that affects millions. To deliver on that promise we need sustained, predictable funding for #NIH. #RallyMedRes #FundNIH

### Sample Facebook Posts

We encourage you to 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 [Disease or Condition]. 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 @[Organization Facebook Profile] in taking action today. <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org>
- Research funded by the NIH is the cornerstone of new advances against the toughest diseases we face, and it fuels jobs and economic growth across the United States. Tell Congress: Medical research should be a top priority. <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org>
- Medical research is important to me because [Personal Reason]. That's why I'm joining the @[Organization Facebook Profile] to rally for medical research and urge Congress invest in the NIH! Add your voice at the link below! <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org>

### #IRallyFor Selfie Campaign

Participants in the virtual Rally Hill Day as well as those participating in the Day of Action are encouraged to post a selfie to social media platforms (particularly Facebook and Twitter) that reads “#IRallyfor \_\_\_\_\_ ” to promote their personal connection to the Rally for Medical Research. [Click here](#) to download and print your own #IRallyFor sign!

### Sample Text Messages

If your organization has the capability to send text alerts to your network of advocates, you may wish to use a message similar to these:

- Tell Congress that medical research should be a national priority. It only takes a minute! <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org>
- Let your member of Congress know that medical research is important to you! Reach out to them here: <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org> [you may wish to insert the link to your own engagement page instead]

Sample Letter to the Editor<sup>3</sup>

[DATE]

To the Editor:

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

**A second way to start the letter:** As Congress continues to work on many challenging budget issues, I urge Representative [Last Name] and Senators [Last Name] to support robust funding growth 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 to discover 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 supports research that is too expensive and risky for private industry to undertake alone but has led to

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from a sample Letter to the Editor created by the Coalition for the Life Sciences and available at [www.coalitionforlifesciences.org](http://www.coalitionforlifesciences.org)

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.

Sample Op-Ed<sup>4</sup>

**Op-Ed: Medical Research Should be Top Priority for Congress**

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. New therapies are saving the lives of patients with cancers that were once thought untreatable.

[Insert Personal Story]

There's no question that a strong investment in medical research reaps significant benefits for patients and future generations. Over the last five years, Congress has made medical research a priority by increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by a total of 11.6 billion, or 39%. While these boosts are welcome and should be applauded, ongoing robust, sustained and predictable funding is required to ensure that progress continues.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from a sample Op-ed developed by Research!America and available at [www.SaveResearch.org](http://www.SaveResearch.org)

This isn't just a health issue; it's also an economic one. In FY 2019 alone, NIH research contributed to over \$81 billion in new economic activity and supported nearly 476,000 jobs. Continued, strong investment in the NIH is vital to supporting jobs 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]**

Medical research is fundamental to our health and economic prosperity. We need a strong commitment from Congress this year and every subsequent year to make NIH funding a national priority. Only with this commitment can we strengthen our research infrastructure and eliminate current and emerging health threats.