

## Eshoo Statement on NIH Reform Act

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Washington, D.C. -- Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, delivered the following statement on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives during consideration of H.R. 6164, the National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006.

"Madam Speaker, I want to start off by saluting Chairman Barton. This is a great achievement for the chairman and for the country. Joe, you did everything for the right reasons; and you did it the right way with everyone.

"This jurisdiction of NIH, which I very affectionately call the 'National Institutes of Hope,' is really a crown jewel in the jurisdiction of the Energy and Commerce Committee. But it has been 13 years since there has been a reauthorization and it is extraordinary that a bill of such import has been brought to the floor and will receive the support, I think almost unanimously, of Members in the House of Representatives. And that is a tribute to you of how you have done this and how much you have cared about it. There are the letters of endorsement from, it is really one of the greatest honor rolls of endorsers and stakeholders in the country, and the chairman made reference to them. So, to Chairman Barton, congratulations, job well done, something really important for the people of our country.

"We are considering H.R. 6164, the National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006. It is a very important piece of legislation that will reauthorize our foremost medical research center and the Federal focal point for medical research in our Nation. The goal of the NIH is to acquire new knowledge to help prevent, to detect, to diagnose and to treat diseases and disabilities from the rarest genetic disorder to the common cold. The American people look to the NIH. They trust the NIH. They want us to make investments in it, because it does represent hope for the future.

"The NIH conducts research in its own laboratories. It supports research of non-Federal scientists in universities. And I am proud that Stanford Medical School, under the great leadership of Dr. Phil Pizzo, is one of the supporters of this legislation. The NIH supports medical schools, hospitals, and research institutions throughout the country and abroad. I think many people don't realize that, that there is a portion of this that takes place abroad. And it helps in the training of research investigators, and it fosters communication of medical health and health sciences information. This Act is going to help to ensure the continued success of the NIH.

"There are many, many commendable provisions of this bill. The establishment of the common fund should serve to stimulate trans-NIH research in areas of emerging scientific opportunities, rising public health challenges, or knowledge gaps that deserve special attention and are going to benefit from additional research that involves collaboration between two or more institutes or centers.

"Another significant provision of the legislation is the creation of an infrastructure to evaluate and report on the NIH research portfolio. It is very, very important, very difficult to go through and to document the contributions of the NIH in key areas, and this is going to provide for that. The bill contains many admirable goals and provisions that are going to help NIH in its long-term battle to overcome human disease and disability.

"What the bill does not address, and some Members raised this at the committee, is the issue of funding. Some of us think there could be more funding, that there is insufficient funding. This really is the largest problem facing the NIH today. After years of significant funding increases for NIH, this Congress has effectively chosen to flat-fund the agency. After adjusting for inflation, this could turn out to actually be a funding cut.

"In an effort to address this problem, Representative Markey offered an amendment during our full committee markup last week. His amendment sought to ensure that this Congress provided a real 5 percent increase in funding for NIH, not one that could be diminished by inflation. But the amendment did not pass. It was defeated along a party line vote. A significant increase in the number of grant applications combined with a frozen level of congressional funding has really taken its toll on the NIH. That is why some of us thought that it was very important to act and to provide more resources to ensure that NIH's funding levels don't fall any lower.

"Despite the fact that this bill offers no assurances of what I just described, it is still a good bill, it is a solid bill, it makes progress, and I will support its passage, and I urge my colleagues to do that."

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