

## **Opinion: Keeping America First in Medical Research**

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During the recent presidential campaign, a major theme of the Trump campaign was that poorly negotiated trade agreements, currency manipulation and unfair trade practices had crippled the nation's once preeminent manufacturing sector - hurting our ability to compete abroad while inhibiting economic and job growth here at home.

There is another area of the economy where America's preeminent position may be at risk, but not because of trade agreements or currency manipulation. Global competition in medical research and the life sciences has intensified as China, Germany, India, Singapore, Sweden, the United Kingdom and others have taken steps to challenge America's leadership position.

As federal funding for agencies such as the National Institutes of Health has been relatively flat for the past decade, these other countries have invested heavily in medical research. In 2004, U.S. medical research and development spending represented 57 percent of total global spending, by 2014 that figure had fallen to 45 percent. Asia - led by China, Japan, South Korea, India and Singapore - is quickly gaining ground and increasing investment by nearly 10 percent per year.

Fortunately, medical research and the NIH have traditionally enjoyed bipartisan support in Congress. Members in both parties understand the critical role that the federal government can play in funding biomedical research and the importance of biomedical research to our economy. In 2015, NIH research funding directly and indirectly supported 352,349 jobs in the U.S. and its approximate \$30 billion budget produced more than \$60 billion in new economic activity.

We cannot forget that medical research is the beginning of hope for everyone who suffers from serious illnesses like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. In recent years, NIH-funded advances have led to a vaccine to prevent cervical cancer and a test to predict breast cancer recurrence, helped identify genetic markers for mental illness, improved asthma treatments, and nearly eliminated HIV transmissions between mother and child.

Other nations face the challenges of budget deficits and sluggish growth that await President-elect Trump, but they have chosen not only to sustain but also to increase their commitment to medical research funding. They recognize that just as bridges and roads provide the critical infrastructure for a growing economy, investments in medical research also provide the infrastructure necessary for a thriving and increasing competitive global innovation economy.

While medical research and the life sciences industry did not receive significant attention during the campaign, President-elect Trump's extensive experience in business should lead him to correctly conclude that federal research funding is a good investment and is more than deserving of substantial and sustained support.

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