Support Research for Neurologic Disease

Background
In 2013, President Obama launched the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative to increase the development and application of new technologies and ultimately improve comprehensive understanding of the brain in action. The BRAIN Initiative seeks to map circuits of the brain, measure electrical and chemical activity, and understand how their interplay creates unique cognitive and behavioral capabilities.

The BRAIN Initiative secured $65 million in funding commitments in 2015 from five federal agencies, including National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA). President Obama’s FY2016 budget proposes an additional $135 million in funding.

Problem
100 million Americans suffer from brain disorders at some point in their lives—neurodevelopmental disorders, mood and anxiety disorders, neurodegenerative diseases, and many others. Knowing more about the brain has the potential to vastly improve many areas of human health.

The brain is the most complex organ in the body. As a result, it may take decades for discoveries in basic neuroscience to lead to new treatments and cures for brain disease. In order to make these discoveries, interdisciplinary collaborations must be formed between geneticists, chemists, engineers, physicists, and industry partners. The BRAIN Initiative can only be successful with continuous, dedicated funding and highly-skilled researchers.

Congress must appropriate federal funds if the BRAIN Initiative is to continue and succeed.

Consequences
The impact, prevalence, and economic cost of neurologic diseases in the US is projected to vastly increase as the population ages. There is no time to waste. Strong investments in neuroscience research are needed now. For too long, research funding for neurologic illnesses such as Alzheimer’s, stroke, migraine, epilepsy, and traumatic brain injury has fallen far short of investments made in other areas such as cancer and HIV/AIDS. All diseases are deserving of biomedical advances that lead to effective therapies and cures. The BRAIN Initiative has enormous potential to solve persistent mysteries of brain function, create technologies that seed new industries, and open the door to new treatments for diseases and disorders of the nervous system.

Solution
For FY2016, support $135 million for the BRAIN Initiative. Continuous, dedicated funding for the BRAIN Initiative will identify further opportunities to improve scientific understanding of the human brain and prevent and cure brain disease.