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 21st Century Cures Act became law December 2016 (PL 114-225). It included $1.51 billion in additional funding for the BRAIN Initiative over the next ten years, subject to annual appropriations for the NIH Innovation Account. Sustained funding for both the BRAIN Initiative and the NIH is needed to build on existing scientific advancements.

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 and other NIH neuroscience research can only be successful with continuous, dedicated funding for highly-skilled researchers.

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. 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 and NIH research have 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

Support Senate Appropriations Committee-approved $34.1 billion in NIH funding for FY2017 and the continued annual appropriations to fully fund the NIH Innovation Account, as authorized by the 21st Century Cures Act.