

Population Association of America and  
Association of Population Centers

ACTION ALERT

TELL YOUR U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO SIGN THE ROYBAL-  
ALLARD "DEAR COLLEAGUE" LETTER SUPPORTING NIH  
FUNDED BEHAVIORAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH



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 Send to a Colleague

Today, July 24, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter to the members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The letter, which is addressed to Dr. Francis Collins, Director, National Institutes of Health (NIH), reinforces that NIH support of behavioral and social science, especially economics research, is a key component of the agency's mission.

At a time when some members of Congress may be questioning NIH support of these disciplines, Congresswoman Roybal-Allard wants Dr. Collins to know that many members understand and support the agency's investment in these areas.

**We need you to tell your U.S. Representative to sign the letter.**

### **REQUESTED RESPONSE**

**Please e-mail or call your representative in the U.S. House of Representatives to urge him or her to sign the Roybal-Allard "Dear Colleague" letter to Dr. Francis Collins, NIH Director, regarding the agency's support of behavioral, social and economics research. The deadline for signatures is July 30.**

Below is a sample message:

I am Dr. \_\_\_\_, your constituent and a population scientist who works at \_\_\_\_\_. I receive support from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct research on (amount and/or type of research support your institution receives. If you or your institution do **not** directly receive NIH funding, you may emphasize how you, your colleagues, and students benefit from NIH support of large-scale data sets, such as the Health and Retirement Study and National Study of Adolescent Health, to conduct your own research and research training).

I am concerned about critical comments and questions some members of Congress have expressed recently about NIH support of behavioral/social science research-- economics research in particular. I am concerned that these comments could affect adversely the agency's ability to fund these disciplines in the future--despite the clear mandate that NIH has in its mission statement. NIH support of economics related research is essential if we are to understand the role that socio-economic status, savings, retirement, and income play in the development and progression of disease and disability.

To reinforce how economics research and behavioral and social science research overall are essential components of the NIH mission, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter on July 24. The "Dear Colleague" letter is directed at NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins and conveys support for NIH investment in the behavioral and social sciences--economics research in particular.

**The deadline for signatures is July 30, 2013. Responses should be sent to Dr. Debbie Jessup, Legislative Director, Congresswoman Roybal-Allard ([Debbie.Jessup@mail.house.gov](mailto:Debbie.Jessup@mail.house.gov)).**

I urge you to show your support for NIH support of behavioral/social science research, and economics research in particular, by signing this important letter.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

#### Contact Information

- If you do not know who your representative is in the U.S. House of Representatives, you may look it at: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>.
- We encourage you to use your member's web-based contact form when sending your request. These forms are usually found on each member's home page under "Contact."

## **Text of Roybal-Allard "Dear Colleague" Letter**

The Honorable Francis Collins  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892  
Dear Dr. Collins:

It has come to our attention that there have been recent discussions about the relevance of economics research within the scope of the mission of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We are writing to affirm our belief that the NIH should sustain its crucial support for behavioral, and social science research, including economics. Support for these areas of research is consistent with the NIH mission to "enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability."

As you know, scientific discovery requires support of basic, applied, and translational research across a range of academic disciplines, including the behavioral and social sciences. The underlying causes of diseases and disabilities are complex. Many factors, including genetic, social, biological, environmental, and behavioral, must be understood and unraveled to fully appreciate how these conditions occur and can be prevented and treated effectively across different populations. The social sciences are instrumental to this progress, and researchers from economics, psychology, sociology, demography, history, geography, communications and political science, have all made contributions that build our collective knowledge on the determinants of health and provide the foundation for future policy action.

To date, NIH support of behavioral and social science research has yielded important scientific advances. In particular, the agency's support of economics research has generated a number of findings that address some of the most pressing issues in health research including, how to promote healthy behaviors, stem the onset of chronic conditions, improve the productivity of medical care, and

understand how socio-economic factors interact with communities to perpetuate health disparities among population groups. In some instances this research has also generated significant cost savings, such as the NIH funded study which led to changes in the pharmacy benefit system and eliminated \$100 million annual costs without generating adverse health effects.

NIH funded economics research also has global implications. For example, James Heckman, a Nobel Prize winning, NIH-funded economist, demonstrated that early interventions in the cognitive and socio-emotional development of disadvantaged children have much higher economic returns than interventions that occur later in life. This research has improved the health of children around the world.

We applaud you for fulfilling your agency's mission by supporting high quality scientific interdisciplinary behavioral and social science research, and encourage you to remain steadfast in your support of social science research. Social sciences, economics in particular, have always been an important pillar of knowledge in our effort to improve national and global health. We thank you for your dedicated efforts and look forward to our ongoing collaborations as we work together to eliminate health disparities and improve the health and well being of every member of this great country.