Providing Input on Federal Funding Priorities through the "Portal Submission" Process: A Quick Guide

What Are Appropriations Portal Submissions? As the annual federal budgeting process begins, your representatives in the U.S. House and Senate have an opportunity to weigh in with their respective Appropriations Committees on how discretionary (non-entitlement) federal funding, which is otherwise known as "appropriations," should be prioritized and allocated across federal agencies and programs. These are called "programmatic" requests. Members of Congress (MOC) can also submit "report language" (instructions to federal agencies and programs) to be considered for inclusion in the "explanatory statements" that accompany appropriations legislation.

At the beginning of each appropriations cycle, MOCs provide constituents the opportunity to offer input on their appropriations priorities. Most members establish a "portal" on their websites early in the year that constituents can use to make a funding (programmatic) or report language request. Member offices compile and consider constituent input as they put together their appropriations priorities to be shared with the House and Senate appropriations committees.

Why Should you Submit an Appropriations Request? Because it is a concrete opportunity to contribute to congressional decision-making that bears on the health, prosperity, and well-being of the American people. And in the context of funding for medical and health research, the implications stretch farther, benefiting populations across the globe. Most congressional offices have a system in place to capture and consider every request they receive…your views on funding priorities will be heard.

> *Note*: in case useful, here is a short primer the Congressional Research Service put together on the annual appropriations process.

So how do you do it? Here is the process.

Find your Representatives' FY26 Portals:

1. **Find your Representatives in the House and Senate** on Congress.gov along with links to their websites.

2. **Look for their Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 26) Appropriations Requests Portal on their Websites.** Some members will have these posted right on the landing page of their website. If not, try searching their website or typing into Google "[member name] Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Requests portal." If you still cannot find it, call their office using the number on their website and request access to their portal or submission forms – if you call, be sure to mention you are a constituent.

3. **Submit to the Portal.** The portal will walk you through a series of questions related to the national and local significance of your appropriations request. Following is a sample submission to a member of the Alabama delegation using a request focused on prioritizing a robust increase for NIH in Fiscal Year. If you run across questions not listed below and would like assistance navigating them or would like help promoting a different research priority, contact Trent Carlson at tcarlson@researchamerica.org.

Portal Submission Template:

1. **Type of Request:** Programmatic.

   This question refers to whether your request is "programmatic," meaning it is a funding request, or if you are requesting report language. In this example, we are making a programmatic request.

2. **Bill Language or Report Language:** Bill Language

   Some portals also ask whether you are submitting bill or report language. Programmatic requests are "bill language" requests.

3. **Subcommittee:** LHHS

   The Appropriations Committee has 12 subcommittees responsible for funding various agencies and programs. Most portals include a drop-down menu asking you to specify which subcommittee is responsible for funding

the agency or program you are promoting. For NIH funding, this is Labor, Health and Human Services, Education. (LHHS).

4. **Department:** Health and Human Services

   You may be asked to specify where the agency is located. NIH is located within the Department of Health and Human Services

5. **Agency:** The National Institutes of Health.

6. **Account:** N/A

   For NIH as a whole, you can leave this blank or put "N/A;" if requesting funding for an institute or center within the NIH, enter their name here.

7. **Program:** Leave this blank or put "N/A."

8. **Give a short title to your request:** Funding Request for NIH

   Sometimes portals will request a short title, like the one we included above.

9. **List the priority of this request (If your organization is submitting more than one request, please list the priority of this request):** 1

   Portals will ask you to rank your requests in order of priority. If you are only submitting one request, you can simply put "1" or "1/1."

10. **Funding Information:** Portals may ask various questions about current, past, or proposed funding for the agency or program. Following are relevant funding levels for NIH:

    o **Enacted funding level for FY25:** As of this writing, FY25 funding for NIH has not been finalized. The portal should accept N/A.

- Often portals have asked for the numbers in the House and Senate Appropriations bills:
  - **House Bill FY25:** $48.58 B
  - **Senate Bill FY25:** $48.81 B
- **Enacted funding level for FY24:** $47.08 B
- **Enacted funding level for FY23:** $47.46 B
- **Enacted funding level for FY22:** $45.33 B

11. **Amount you are requesting:** $51.79 billion

For the purposes of this example, we're "going bold" by requesting a 10% increase in the NIH budget, or $51.79 billion.

Note: the next few questions form the meat of the request – you will be asked to provide the "what" and "why." Depending on the portal, you may have significant or very limited space for these sections.

12. **Program description; Describe the problem or issue your request will address:**

"The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the Unites States and the world's foremost medical research agency and a pioneer of medical discovery for more than a century. As it stands, NIH can only afford to fund 1 in 5 research proposals yet has been able to produce medical research that has saved hundreds of millions of lives across the globe. These efforts provide a tangible benefit to the priorities and well-being of the American people. A national public opinion survey the nonpartisan organization [Research!America](#) released in January of 2025 found that 9 in 10 Americans, regardless of political affiliation, believe it is important for the Trump Administration and Congress to assign a higher priority to ensuring faster medical progress. These and other results from that survey reinforce the importance of robustly funding NIH. Millions of Americans die prematurely each year from diseases and conditions that can be overcome if we summon the will and leverage our nation's strengths."

13. **Describe the goals, results, and/or expected outcome of the request:**

"We believe that a 10% funding increase to NIH would serve our nation's national security and economic interests, and has the potential to unlock longer, healthier lives for Americans and people across the globe. Bolstering the NIH's budget would allow for a significant increase in meritorious grants and provide additional return on investment to the American people. The U.S. should continue to set the pace of medical progress on the world stage, and that begins with ensuring NIH's budget receives robust funding."

14. **Explain why this MOC should support this request, including how it will benefit the nation in general and their state and/or district in particular.**

(We are using Alabama as an example, but you can pull your own state's statistics from the links below**):**

"The National Institutes of Health stimulates the economy in Alabama and across the country. In FY23, a total of [$386,268,881 in NIH funding was awarded across the state of Alabama] which supported [over 4,750 jobs] [For district-level: $amount of this total funded awards in state-district specifically]. Across the nation, NIH funding supports an estimated $92.89 billion in economic activity.

In addition, NIH remains an ideal model for federal investment. For every $100 million of funding, NIH supported research generates $598 million in further research and development. But the received benefits from NIH are not limited to economic revenue, NIH-funded basic research translates directly to drugs and therapies on the market which improve livelihoods and save lives across Alabama and America."

Resources to pull NIH statistics from:
  o FY24 state and district level funding is provided here.

- o For the number of jobs supported by NIH by state we use UMR's [NIH in Your State](#) resource.
- o More examples of NIH contributions can be found at:
  https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research/serving-society/spurring-economic-growth
  https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research/serving-society/direct-economic-contributions .

15. ***IMPORTANT NOTE:*** *Often portals will only have one section where they ask about the nature of your request and how it benefits their state/district/the nation. In this case, you can put the description, justification, and economic impact sections into the same response. MOCs sometimes have word or character limits on these responses, in that case edit down the sample submissions as you see fit to satisfy the limit. However, be sure to include a general description of why the agency's mission is important, why the funding increase is necessary to satisfy this mission, and the connection of their mission and funding to the MOC's state/district/the nation.*

16. **Do you intend to make the same request to other members of Congress? If yes, please select the member(s) of Congress:**

    If you plan to submit this request to more than one MOC you can list the others here.