

U.S. Senator

TOM HARKIN OF IOWA

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Statement of Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA)

At the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Hearing to Examine the National Institutes of Health Budget

As Prepared for Delivery

“Good morning. The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education will now come to order.

“I want to start by welcoming Dr. Francis Collins, who of course has appeared before this subcommittee many times over the past two decades. Until now, he testified as the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute. Today, he wears a much bigger hat, as the director of the entire National Institutes of Health. That’s quite a leap. The FY10 budget for the Genome Institute is \$516 million. The budget for NIH as a whole is \$31 billion. And of course his portfolio as NIH director is much larger than the one he left behind at NHGRI.

“But one thing you can say about Francis Collins: He always thinks big. And when you think about the issues that confront NIH today – What role does biomedical research play in health care reform? How can we capitalize on recent advances like the Human Genome Project? How can we do a better job of translating basic research into treatments? And how can we encourage our brightest young minds to enter this field when budgets are so tight? – you need someone who thinks big.

“So – no pressure, Dr. Collins, but we’re expecting great things from you in the years ahead.

“The President’s budget for the NIH in Fiscal Year 2011 calls for a \$1 billion increase over the Fiscal Year 2010 level, for a total of \$32 billion. That works out to a 3.2 percent increase – the same as the biomedical inflation rate.

“But Fiscal Year 2011 will bring with it a very special set of challenges – namely, how to achieve the softest possible landing for NIH after the \$10.4 billion that was appropriated in the Recovery Act. This is one area that I hope to explore with Dr. Collins in the question-and-answer period.

“I also want to spend some time discussing one of the questions I raised earlier – how we can more effectively translate basic science into treatments and practices that actually improve people’s health. Dr. Collins has heard me say before: There’s a reason it’s called the National Institutes of Health, not the National Institutes of Basic Research.

“But before we hear from Dr. Collins, I yield to Senator Cochran for his opening statement.”