

Opening Statement
(as delivered)
U.S. SENATOR ROY BLUNT (R-Mo.), Chairman
Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee
October 7, 2015
HEARING: “National Institutes of Health: Investing in a Healthier Future”

The Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies will come to order.

I’m certainly pleased we could have this opportunity this morning, Dr. Collins, to talk to you and the other Institute Directors about the work you’re doing and the work you’d like to do.

Certainly every family faces health concerns during their lifetime, and there are so many things that can be done by NIH that I think can’t be done as well anywhere else.

A new drug, a new device, a new treatment, can take anywhere from a decade to longer to develop. It can cost billions of dollars on occasion with a pretty high failure rate even when you think you’re on the right path.

Certainly it’s necessary for the federal government to invest in biomedical research. It represents the hopes of lots of people and lots of families, and particularly now as we see conditions growing as people survive heart problems and stroke problems. We see more people with Alzheimer’s and cancer challenges. We see the potential for designer medicine largely because of the great work that was done to figure out how to define and understand the human genome system in a better way.

This year, this Subcommittee and the full Committee have placed a high priority on this research. We have planned for and have a bill that includes two billion dollars of extra money for that research, an increase of seven percent over current year’s spending.

Over the past decade, with not much new money going into NIH the purchasing power at NIH has decreased by about twenty two percent. We hope to see that reversed if we’re successful with what we’re trying to do to provide the increase that we’re looking at here.

These are clearly difficult budgetary times and I’m sure we could spend a lot of this hearing talking about how there should be more money for other things in this budget, and there’s a disagreement on that in some cases and an agreement in some cases that if we had all the money in the world, the priorities might be a lot easier to achieve.

But I’ll look forward to hearing from you, Dr. Collins, from your team that you’ve brought. And as we talked about this morning I specifically said can you bring some of the people that we haven’t seen lately who are very much focused on the individual areas of research so we can get a greater sense of understanding what the potential is, what the needs are, what is out there that you’re seeing and begin to see.

And also, the challenge of young researchers having a research grant approved are dramatically less than they were a decade ago, and I'm sure that that's a topic that we'll want to discuss as well. How long do young researchers stay and research if they continue to have their ideas not allow them to move forward?

So, those are all things we want to talk about today. We're glad you're here. I want to turn to Senator Murray who is a big supporter of your work as well for her opening statement.