

May 2, 2006 – Federal Research Public Access Act

Mr. President, I rise this morning to join my friend Senator Lieberman in introducing legislation that will ensure U.S. taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, and will help enhance America's ability to compete in the global economy.

Each year, our federal government invests more than \$55 billion on basic and applied research. That's roughly 40 percent of the current two-year budget for my home state of Texas.

The bulk of this money is spent by approximately 10 agencies, including: the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, NASA, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Agriculture. These agencies use the money to fund research which is usually conducted by outside researchers working for universities, healthcare systems, and other groups.

Most of the time, researchers will publish the results of their work in an academic journal. The NIH, for example, estimates that roughly 65,000 articles are published each year that report on research either partially or entirely funded by NIH.

Unfortunately, as it stands now, most Americans have little - to no - timely access to this wealth of information, despite the fact that their tax dollars paid for the research. Some federal agencies, with the NIH chief amongst them, have taken some very positive steps in the right direction to require that these articles reporting on government-funded research be freely available to the public in a timely manner.

In fact, Mr. President, today marks the one-year anniversary of the implementation of a groundbreaking public access policy at NIH developed by Director Elias Zerhouni. I thank Dr. Zerhouni and his colleagues for their leadership on this important issue and for energizing this debate.

While Dr. Zerhouni and NIH have made strong progress, Sen. Lieberman and I believe more must be done, not only at NIH and in medical research, but throughout the federal government and the sciences in general.

That is why today we are introducing the **Federal Research Public Access Act of 2006**, legislation that will refine the work done by NIH and require that the federal government's leading underwriters of research adopt meaningful public-access policies.

Our legislation is a simple, common sense approach that will advance the public's access to the research it funds. We hope this access will help accelerate science, innovation, and discovery.

Under our bill, all federal departments and agencies that invest \$100 million or more annually in research will be asked to develop a public access policy. Each policy will require that all articles that result from federal funding be deposited in a publicly accessible archive no later than six months after publication.

Our bill simply says to all researchers who seek government funding that we want the results of your work to be seen by the largest possible audience. It will ensure that U.S. taxpayers do not have to pay twice for the same research - once to conduct it, and a second time to read it.

This legislation is an opportunity for our government to better leverage our investment in research, and to ensure a greater return on that investment, which is all the more important given the current budget situation. By sharing this information quickly and broadly with all potential users, we can advance science, accelerate the pace of new discoveries and innovations, and improve the lives and welfare of people at home and abroad.

Mr. President, all Americans will be positively affected as a result of this bill:

- Patients diagnosed with a disease or condition will be able to use the Internet to access the full text of articles containing the latest information on treatment and prognosis
- Students at small institutions will have equal access to research articles they need to complete assignments and further their studies
- Researches will have their findings more broadly and more quickly disseminated, possibly sparking further discovery and innovation

The Internet has dramatically altered how the world gathers and shares information. The Internet gives the homemaker in Houston the ability to find volumes of information about a recent medical diagnosis given to a family member. It allows a young community college student in rural West Texas -- a great distance from the nearest research library -- to learn the latest in scientific discovery and hopefully spur him to continue his studies.

While a comprehensive competitiveness agenda is still in the works, ensuring greater access to scientific information is one way we can help bolster interest in these important fields and move this issue forward while at the same time helping accelerate the pace of discovery and innovation. Through this legislation, I hope to ensure that students, researchers, and every American has access the published results of federally funded research, and I ask for my colleagues' support.