The ACADEMY for Radiology & Biomedical Imaging Research

Advancing Innovation in Imaging Science

ACADEMY UPDATE

Policy and Legislative Briefing

October 9, 2026

Dear Academy friends,

THINGS TO KNOW

- **Congratulations to the 2026 Council of Distinguished Investigators!** 55 investigators have been selected for this prestigious honor. View the announcement here. Join us at RSNA to congratulate them!
- **Senate acts to protect NIH grants from political interference.** (read below)
- **NIH & Related Updates:** FY26 spending, impacts on research funding, and pocket rescissions. Scroll to read more.
- **NIH RFI on changes to peer review closes on Oct. 13th!** Read more about the change here and submit your comment by Tuesday.
- **NIH RFI on reducing administrative burden.** Read more and submit a comment here by Dec. 8th.
- **Proposed OMB Rule:** The House passed the Senate's CR temporarily blocking the proposed OMB rule and extending government funding until Dec. 11th.

Key Dates

Oct. 13	**Comments due on NIH RFI on Proposed Changes to Reporting Outcomes from Peer Review. Closes on Tuesday!**
Oct. 19	**Comments due on NIH RFI on Draft Biosafety Policy for Research Involving Biohazards.**
Dec. 1	**The Academy's Gold Medal & Distinguished Investigator Ceremony at RSNA 2026.** *You do not have to be registered for RSNA to attend.*
Dec. 8	**Comments due on NIH RFI on Opportunities to Reduce Administrative Burden in NIH Extramural Research**

Academy Updates

Congratulations to the 2026 Council of Distinguished Investigators!

We are pleased to announce that 55 investigators have been selected to receive the Academy's 2026 Distinguished Investigator (DI) Award. This prestigious honor recognizes outstanding contributions to medical imaging. Nine of this year's DIs are alum members of the Academy's

Council of Early Career Investigators in Imaging (CECI^2), underscoring the importance of recognizing, encouraging, and supporting the accomplishments of early-career investigators. Read the announcement here.

The Academy's 2026 Gold Medal Recipient: Mitchell D. Schnall, MD, PhD

Established in 2014, the Academy Gold Medal recognizes extraordinary contributions to advancing imaging and radiology research, honoring those who have raised the profile of imaging research and encouraged future efforts toward medical advances. Dr. Schnall has been a long-committed advocate and voice for imaging research since the early days of the Academy, championing the imaging science field and driving cutting-edge advancements. Read the full announcement here.

Join us at RSNA 2026 to honor Dr. Schnall and the 2026 Academy Council of Distinguished Investigators!

The Academy will host a special ceremony and reception at the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago, IL. It will be held from 3:00-5:00 pm CT on Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2026, in room S105BC. You do not have to be registered for RSNA to attend.

NIH & Related Updates

- **Senate Acts to Protect NIH Grants from Political Interference**

A bipartisan group of Senate appropriators is working to prevent politics from influencing medical research grant decisions.

  - Key Points:
    - Senators Collins (R-ME) and Murray (D-WA) are leading the effort.
    - They want to add protective language to the Labor-HHS spending bill before December 11. Similar protections are already temporarily in place through the current CR this would make them more permanent. Sen. Kennedy (R-LA) has said he will fight against these protections.
  - Why It Matters:
    - This is a rare example of bipartisan pushback against political interference in NIH funding but it is not guaranteed to succeed given opposition from within the Senate.

- **NIH awarded all its grant funding.**
  - Despite a slow start to the year, the NIH spent its entire external grants budget.
  - The AAMC is tracking developments in NIH extramural funding here. This was most recently updated on October 5 and will continue to be updated.
  - NIH issued fewer grant awards in FY26 than it has in any of the past six years.

- **Two recent articles, one from NPR and another from Stat, examined the impacts of the Trump administration on NIH research funding.**
  - Impacts include…

        - NIH budget spending slowed in 2025 and 2026.
        - Grant renewals began arriving late in 2025.
        - Research areas like racial and ethnic minority research are seeing less support.
        - Early-career grant funding has plateaued since 2024, and the NIH training pipeline has been disrupted, potentially discouraging future careers in academia.
        - The shift to multi-year funding appears to have reduced the number of awards.
        - The shift away from using peer review scores as the basis for funding decisions has created uncertainty among researchers about whether their work will be funded.
        - Funding opportunities are not being shared as often as they were in the past.
    - If you prefer to listen, Stat released this podcast episode: "NIH funding uncertainty thwarts US researchers"

- **It's pocket rescission season.**
    - The Trump administration cut $28 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).
    - This move has received backlash from both sides of the aisle, and Congressional leaders are considering legislation to prevent future pocket rescissions. We expect this issue to carry over into the next legislative session.

Requests for Information

NOT-OD-26-088: RFI on Proposed Changes to Reporting Outcomes from NIH Peer Review. Closes on Tuesday!

On August 14th, the NIH released an RFI that is sparking concern. Instead of providing a numerical score for grant applications, the NIH wants to place applications into three impact categories: "Most competitive", "Competitive", or "Not Discussed". This change would keep the actual scores hidden from applicants, making them only available to peer-review staff. This alteration to the peer-review process raises questions about transparency and political influence in a merit-based process.

To read more, click here.
To comment, click here.
Comments are due by October 13th at 11:59 pm ET.

NOT-OD-26-112: RFI on Draft NIH Biosafety Policy for Research Involving Biohazards

This is a new policy that aims to modernize and strengthen biosafety practices to account for evolving risks. This is part of NIH's broader commitment to gold-standard science.

To read more, click here.
To comment, click here.
Comments are due by October 19th.

RFI on Opportunities to Reduce Administrative Burden in NIH Extramural Research
The NIH is seeking input from the biomedical research community and other interested parties on opportunities to further reduce administrative burden associated with obtaining, maintaining, and reporting on NIH extramural research funding.

To read more and leave a comment, click here.
Comments are due by December 8th at 11:59 pm ET.

NIH Resources

- Track NIH extramural funding (updated October 5), here.
- Number of NIH Extramural Awards by Awarded Month
- Value of NIH Extramural Awards by Awarded Month
- Additional details on Active Funding by State and Active Projects by IC
- Fact sheet about the potential economic impact of the President's FY2027 budget request

OMB Federal Grantmaking Rule

After the House returned from recess, they passed the Senate's CR, temporarily blocking the proposed OMB rule and extending government funding through December 11th.

Check out this tool that displays the makeup of the **released** (*not all the submitted*) comments on the OMB proposed rule. It details the top concerns, form letters, and rule sections in an easy-to-understand dashboard. Keep in mind that over 500k comments were submitted, but only a portion of them have been released and are therefore available for analysis.

> **Academy Action:** If you submitted comments on the proposed rule, share them with your Members of Congress via email. They need to know more about the impact. Here's a template you can use when sharing your comments. Need contact information or have questions? Please contact Olivia Nelson.

MEDIA

"Disruption of global research at NIH is endangering people in the United States and around the world"

"NIH rolling out streamlined website to help public find information more easily"

"November elections may bring little relief for scientists beleaguered by Trump"

"H.I.V. Research Networks Face Uncertain Future Amid Funding Delays"

"GAO: HHS Illegally Withheld $78M in Health-Care Improvement Agency Funds"

"Cancer Vaccines Are the NIH's Next 'Big Bet'"

"Zuckerberg's Biohub Partners With DOE, NIH to Invest $1.8 Billion in Biological Data for AI Models"

Why is advocacy important?

The Academy advocacy video features imaging researchers discussing the importance of their research and the critical role of sustained federal investment in NIH research.

Please feel free to share this video!

Academy "Funding, Facts, and Follow Up" Emails. Monthly updates and funding opportunities: Click here to access an archive of the emails we send out, including our most recent.

Thank you for following these Academy updates! If your department, society, or company isn't yet a supporting Member, now is a great time to join. Your support powers our advocacy efforts and helps advance the interests of our entire community. Discover The Value of the Academy in this short clip and explore our membership [here]. For personalized guidance or questions, connect with Olivia Nelson —we'd love to hear from you!