

During Visit To NIK, Durbin Meets With Dr. Collins and Dr. Fauci, Thanks Staff For COVID-19 Work

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), co-chair of the Senate NIH Caucus, today visited the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland—the foremost biomedical research institute in the world—and met with Dr. Francis Collins, Director of NIH, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). During the visit, Durbin discussed the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of scientific and biomedical research, and thanked NIH researchers for all of their hard work over the past 15 months.

For years, Durbin has been a leader in the Congressional effort to restore the United States' commitment to breakthrough scientific and biomedical research. Thanks to Durbin's efforts as a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the base budget for the NIH has increased 41.5 percent over the past six years, or \$12.6 billion.

“Where would we be in America today without research and innovation? We certainly would not have access to a COVID-19 vaccine, or rapid testing, and a chance to the end this pandemic. For years, I have said that the most important investment we can make in our future is in biomedical and scientific research,” said Durbin. “I’m honored to work with the President and members of Congress on both sides of the aisle to continue supporting scientific and medical research. It is the smartest investment we can make for our health, our future, and our economy.”

In March, Durbin introduced the American Cures Act, which would create mandatory funds to provide steady, predictable funding for breakthrough research at America’s top research agencies, allowing the United States to remain a leader in development and discovery for decades to come. The legislation would provide annual budget increases of five percent plus inflation at America’s top four biomedical research agencies, including the NIH.

Durbin met with President Joe Biden and a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers in the Oval Office in March to discuss how best to achieve advances in the fight against cancer. In 2015, Durbin launched the bipartisan Senate NIH Caucus with the goal to preserve our nation’s global competitiveness by highlighting the need for investments in cutting-edge research being performed by the agency.

Research and development (R&D) funding in the United States has been lagging in recent decades. During the 1960s, the United States invested 17 percent of its discretionary budget on research and development—that number has now decreased to just nine percent. This steady decline has led to a cumulative \$1.5 trillion research investment deficit. Meanwhile, China’s research intensity (GDP expenditures on R&D) has increased sharply since the early 2000s – if this trend continues, China will soon surpass the U.S.