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Commentary

NIH and NCI Advocacy in the New Congress

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Commentary Overview

- AACI looks forward to building on the progress of the Cancer Moonshot with the new presidential administration and the 119th Congress, and sustaining relationships with NIH, NCI, and other government agencies.
- AACI calls on the administration to inspire meaningful changes in public health, including the prevention and early detection of cancer.
- The transition to new directors at NIH and NCI requires the collective engagement of the cancer center community. It will take all of us to educate and engage a new slate of agency officials about the critical role of our centers.
- Opportunities to engage include AACI's spring government relations forum and the 2025 AACI/AACR Hill Day.

With the transition to a new presidential administration and an influx of new members of Congress, the Association of American Cancer Institutes is taking stock of opportunities to continue its vital work at the federal level, promoting the interests of our more than 100 cancer centers, their employees, and the patients and families they serve.

We are deeply grateful to President Joe Biden and his team for their tireless commitment to “ending cancer as we know it.” AACI looks forward to building on the progress of the Cancer Moonshot with President Donald Trump's administration and the 119th Congress, and sustaining relationships with the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and

other government agencies.

AACI calls on the new administration to inspire meaningful changes in public health, including the prevention and early detection of cancer. Through President Trump's "Make America Healthy Again" initiative, cancer centers can play a critical role in improving the health and well-being of Americans. Prevention and public education remain key priorities for AACI cancer centers. By supporting federal initiatives and policies that promote prevention, we can empower individuals and communities to take proactive steps in reducing cancer risk.

Post-Election Activities

Last November, following the presidential election, AACI met with congressional staff to discuss future activities of the House Cancer Caucus and participated in a White House event on the Cancer Moonshot's effort to establish Medicare codes for patient navigation.

During federal budget negotiations at the end of 2024, AACI urged Congress to include the following provisions in the final budget package:

- Extend the \$190 million appropriated to support the Gabriella Miller Kids First Pediatric Research Program, which has been in place since 2014
- Extend Medicare telehealth flexibilities, which are critical to addressing health disparities
- Avoid any cuts in Medicaid payment to hospitals that serve vulnerable patients and include provisions to boost Medicare that improve access to rural health care and funding for community health centers

What's Next for NIH/NCI?

With a new administration comes a shift in leadership at many federal agencies. That reality hit home earlier this month, with **Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD**, [stepping down as NIH director](#), followed by **Kimryn Rathmell, MD, PhD**, [leaving the top post at NCI](#). The transition to new directors of these agencies will necessitate the collective engagement of the cancer center community. Drs. Bertagnolli and Rathmell were steadfast advocates, uniquely tuned into the needs of cancer centers. It will take all of us to educate and engage a new slate of agency officials about the critical role of our centers.

What About Congress?

Last summer, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce [released](#) a proposal that outlined a series of substantial reforms and changes to the operations of the NIH. AACI [responded](#) to the proposal, reiterating the importance of the NIH and the NCI's work. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, led by Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), also proposed [reforms](#) for the NIH. Additionally, President Trump has nominated Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to lead the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Eroding public faith in major health institutions, resulting from deep skepticism stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to calls for major reform.

Our advocacy transcends party lines. We know the NIH and NCI are viewed favorably by a majority of Congress. However, with [63 new members](#) entering the 119th Congress, it will be imperative to advocate for the NIH and the NCI to ensure this new generation of members understands the importance of a strong investment in these agencies. AACI staff is on hand to facilitate productive discussions with members of Congress about the importance of your work.

Targeted Issues

Working with like-minded organizations such as the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), LUNgevity, and the Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association, AACI's Government Relations Steering Committee has endorsed a wide variety of federal legislation for 2025, visit our [Federal Legislation Tracker](#) to learn more about these bills.

Opportunities to Engage

2025 Spring GR Forum

AACI's spring government relations (GR) forum will be held on Tuesday, April 29, hosted by Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Policy issues slated for discussion include site neutrality, Medicaid, immigration, NIH reform, and

facilities and administrative (F&A) rates.

The event is strategically scheduled to coincide with what is expected to be an active and pivotal first 100 days for the incoming presidential administration. It presents an excellent opportunity for AACI government relations professionals to convene, collaborate, and address the critical issues and policy challenges shaping the agenda of the 119th Congress.

2025 AACI/AACR Hill Day

Our 2025 visit to Capitol Hill, co-hosted with AACR, is set for Thursday, May 22, the day after NCI's cancer center directors' retreat. Last year's Hill Day drew 100 participants from 27 states, including cancer center directors, researchers, oncologists, and cancer survivors. **I invite you to join us to meet with congressional legislators and staff.** The voices of cancer center leaders carry significant weight, and your advocacy could have a meaningful impact.

AACI looks forward to working with its member cancer centers in 2025 to advance public health and build a stronger foundation for cancer prevention, treatment, and survivorship. Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of all Americans.

[AACI Legislation Tracker](#)

Our Mission

The Association of American Cancer Institutes (AACI) represents over 100 premier academic and freestanding cancer centers in the United States and Canada. AACI is accelerating progress against cancer by enhancing the impact of academic cancer centers and promoting cancer health equity.

About AACI Commentary

To promote the work of its members, AACI publishes *Commentary*, a monthly editorial series focusing on major issues of common interest to North American cancer centers, authored by cancer center leaders and subject matter experts.

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