

**Research!America Advocacy Award Dinner**  
**The Honorable John Edward Porter, Board Chair**  
**March 16, 2016**

Let's talk about Donald Trump.....Or not.

Just wanted to see if I would get collective gasps, collective groans, or stunned silence... Apparently.....

Research ! America honors leaders in Congress who support science and the federal funding of science and medical research.

Tonight we honor two chairmen who, working together and through their shared commitment to improved human health through research, have brought back a strong commitment to funding support for research after a general absence of thirteen years.

Doubling NIH ended in fiscal 2003.

When begun the assumption was, or certainly the hope was, that funding for NIH would return to its historic 3% real each year on top of the new baseline of \$27B.

What had occurred and would occur that caused it to lose 23% of its purchasing power over the next thirteen years?

First, 2001 occurred, and the need for maximum commitment to national security and national defense which was overwhelmingly supported by the American people.

But this left all other discretionary funding for research, education, infrastructure, safety net, and basically everything else problematical.

In my personal judgment, two colossal mistakes thereafter took place which meant strong support for research funding could not easily resume: an

unnecessary and costly war in Iraq which began the destabilization of the Middle East and tax cuts we could not afford.

Now the two leaders we honor tonight, Senator Roy Blunt of Missouri and Representative Tom Cole of Oklahoma have resumed the leadership of their two Houses of Congress in support of saving lives through discovery and improved health care for all Americans.

We honor these leaders with our Whitehead Award and look forward to working with them and supporting their work in Congress in the years ahead.

Now we are in the midst of the most horrific and most important Presidential campaign in my lifetime.

All you have to do as advocates for science research is to remind yourselves that the next President will appoint the heads of NIH, NCI, NSF FDA, CDC, and ARHQ, as well as all the departments and other science agencies of our government to convince yourselves of the importance of voting and choosing wisely the next leader of our country.

But the reasons I believe our elections have become so horrific and perhaps most importantly drive many good people away from ever considering running for elective office are too much money, gerrymandered districts, and closed primaries.

Regarding the last, the majority of our people do not support either party.

They would rather not be identified with any party, and are left out of our electoral process.

A very small percentage of our people then dictate the candidates from whom we may choose to be President.

These are long-term structural problems that must be addressed if we are to attract to government leaders in the future of the caliber of Representative Cole and Senator Blunt and change is needed.

I personally would start with three proposed Constitutional Amendments to address these impediments to our democracy: elected Members spending half their time soliciting contributions from special interests; parties drawing district lines not to have competitive elections but to insure they don't; and primaries designed to keep candidates and voters out and not to maximize participation.

Proposing constitutional amendments to remedy these problems will, at the very least, focus debate on the structural problems that result in campaigns that lead to gridlock in Washington, and to elections that are an embarrassment to our country.

Finally, we celebrate year after year the scientists and organizations who support and impact science research, as we should.

We don't often mention that research is the beginning of a chain necessary to bring new therapeutics----pharmaceuticals, biologics, device, and procedures--to bear on human health.

Tonight I want to tell you I have a new valve in my heart necessary because my own was severely calcified and not working as it should.

It was replaced by an interventional cardiologist and his team at the Cleveland Clinic, Dr. Semir Karpadia.

He and his wife were invited by Amy and me to join us tonight, but they could not be with us.

But we also invited a renowned cardiologist from North Eastern Ohio.

It was he who suggested after more than a year of no progress here in Washington, that we get a second opinion.

That led us to the Cleveland Clinic which quickly performed the replacement procedure.

So I credit Dr. Roger Tsai for saving my life.

Amy has known Roger and his wife Mary, since grade school and I want to close by asking them to stand with Amy to be recognized.

Thanks for listening to me.