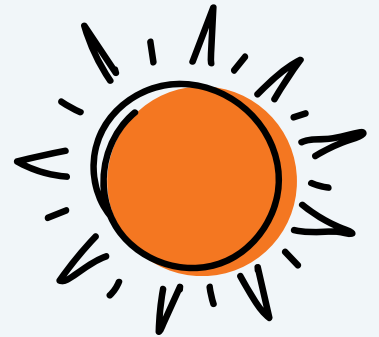


2025 August Advocacy Challenge

TOOLKIT



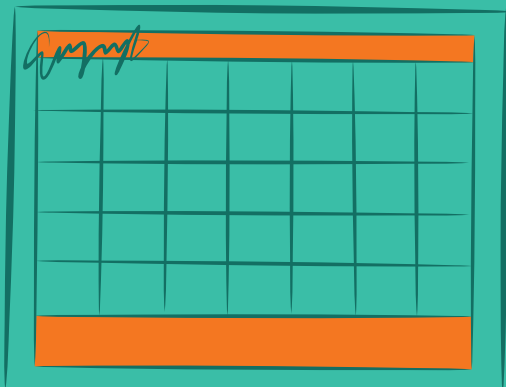
Welcome to Research!America's August Advocacy Challenge Toolkit!

Each August, lawmakers return home to connect with the people they represent. That makes this month a prime opportunity for advocates like you to speak up, share your story, and make the case for research, medical progress, and funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in particular.

The **August Advocacy Challenge** is a fun, flexible way to take action. Whether you are new to advocacy or a seasoned pro, you can choose from a variety of actions, earn points, and even win a prize. Each action, whether it's sending an email, sharing a post on social media, or meeting with your member of Congress, helps amplify your voice and deepen your impact.

This toolkit makes it easy. Inside, you will find tips, templates, and resources to guide you. The challenge actions range from easy to more advanced, but they all have one goal: to help you show why the NIH matters to you, your community, and our nation.

Let's get started! Use this toolkit as your roadmap throughout the month. Now is the time to make your voice heard!



Telling Your Story

Telling your story is one of the most powerful ways to advocate for robust NIH funding. When you meet with your lawmakers or members of their staff, sharing your experience helps them put a face on the issue and brings it to life in a way that facts and figures can't. This guide helps you prepare your story, so it is impactful, clear, and connected to the importance of NIH funding.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Very briefly, describe your life and role in the community before your experience.

“

“I run a neuroscience lab at a public university. For more than a decade, my team has been working to understand the early signs of Alzheimer’s disease. I also mentor students who are training to become the next generation of researchers.”

”

— OR —



“

“I’m a mom of three from Ohio. My youngest, Leo, is in kindergarten, loves dinosaurs, and just started playing T-ball.”

”

A SHIFT OCCURS

Share the moment when things changed.

“

“When Leo started complaining of leg pain and running a low fever, we thought it was growing pains. But two weeks later, he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a fast-growing blood cancer.”

”

“

“Last year, we lost a critical NIH grant due to budget cuts. I had to lay off two researchers, shut down our mouse model study, and withdraw from a planned clinical trial partnership.”

”

THE OUTCOME

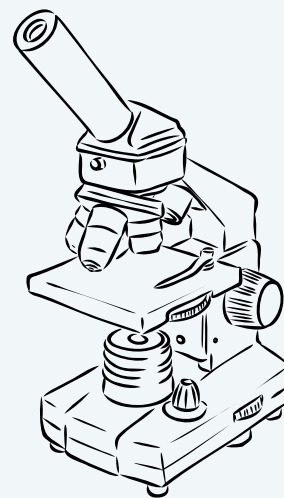
Explain what happened and why it matters.



"We were on the brink of a promising discovery that could've improved early diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Without funding, progress stalled, and we lost talent to other fields."



"Thanks to an NIH-funded clinical trial, Leo was able to receive a new treatment protocol. Today, he's in remission and back to playing baseball."



THE BOTTOM LINE

Connect your story to your ask.



"NIH funding powers research that saves lives and trains future scientists. Please support strong, sustained NIH funding so labs like mine can keep making progress."

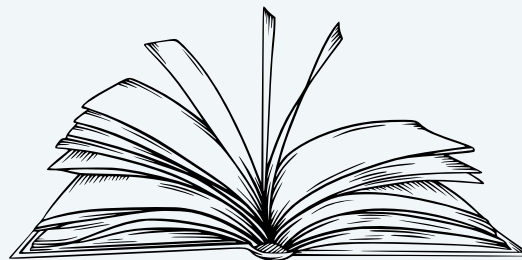


"My child's life was saved by research. We need continued NIH funding to give other families the same hope we were given."



How to Share Your Story with a Member of Congress

Your story can move policymakers to action!



BEFORE YOUR MEETING

- Schedule a meeting or attend a town hall.
- Learn about who you will meet. For example, do they have any local ties to research or health?
- Your meeting may only last 15 minutes. Keep your story and request short, but meaningful.

WHAT TO SAY

1. Introduce Yourself:

- Say you're a constituent.
- Mention what you do for work or your community role.
- Ask the staff about themselves, too. Make it a conversation!

2. Share Your Story: (See “How to Structure Your Story” above.)

- You have limited time, so stick to the highlights of your story.
- You can emphasize different parts of your story based on the values and priorities of each lawmaker.

3. Make the Ask:

- “Please support robust funding for the NIH.”
- “Will you protect NIH from budget cuts?”
- Tie the ask back to your story.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Say thank you!
- Send a follow-up email with a short recap and your contact information.
- Stay in touch! Building a relationship takes time.

TIPS FOR A GREAT MEETING

- Be warm and respectful. Start on a positive note even if it is simply saying: “Thank you for meeting with me.”
- You are the expert in your story; there are no wrong answers.
- It’s OK to say you don’t know something. You can include additional information in your follow-up message.
- Stay focused and avoid too many technical details.
- It’s OK to politely push back, if needed.
- Do NOT bring personal politics into the meeting.
- Always thank them for their time and follow up by email.



REMEMBER: YOUR VOICE MATTERS. YOUR STORY CAN INSPIRE CHANGE.

Calling Your Lawmaker

Below are some tips and a sample script for a phone call to your lawmakers. The most powerful conversations are grounded in your own personal experiences and perspectives. We hope this guide provides you with a useful starting point.



FINDING YOUR LAWMAKERS

1. Click [here](#) to be directed to find your lawmaker on Congress.gov.
2. Enter your home address when prompted and click the magnifying glass.
3. Obtain contact information by clicking on “contact” under their address and phone number.
4. This will take you to their congressional website, which typically includes a contact page, office locations, and phone numbers.

TIPS FOR YOUR SCRIPT

1. Introduce yourself and where you live.
2. Tell the staff what you are asking for.
3. Tell your story; you have limited time, so stick to the highlights.
4. Restate why your ask is important.
5. Thank the staff for their time.

**DO NOT CALL LAWMAKERS FROM OUTSIDE
YOUR STATE OR DISTRICT BECAUSE THOSE
MESSAGES ARE OFTEN IGNORED.**

Phone Script Template

Hi, my name is [YOUR NAME], and I'm a constituent living in [City/State].

I'm calling to urge [Senator/Representative LAST NAME] to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health to \$51.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2026. These investments drive innovation and discovery, fuel our economy, and save countless lives.

I am a researcher [Optional: Include Your Affiliation] and federal research funding powers... [BRIEF DESCRIPTION: e.g., my research on treatments for rare genetic diseases, our work using wearables to combat burnout in nurses, our clinical trial on palliative care for heart failure patients in rural Appalachia, etc.].

Please ensure robust funding for NIH and that the life-saving treatments and cures the agency helps to build remain top national priorities.
Thank you for your time.

EXAMPLE

Hi, my name is Matt Ryan, and I'm a constituent living in San Francisco, California.

I'm calling to urge Senator Padilla to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health to \$51.3 billion in Fiscal Year 2026. These investments drive innovation and discovery, fuel our economy, and save countless lives.

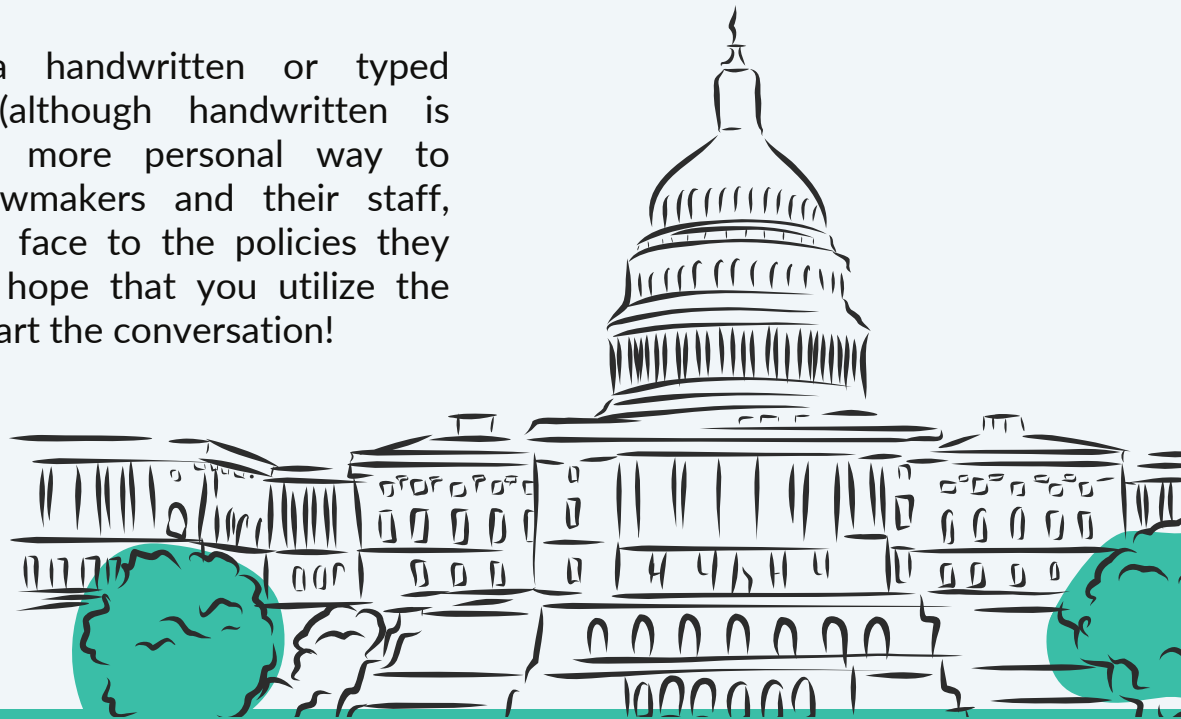
I am an MD/PhD student at UCSF, and federal funding powers my research on understanding the drivers of drug resistance to develop new treatments and diagnostics for advanced prostate cancer. My work would not have been possible without funding from the NIH.

Please ensure robust funding for NIH and that the lifesaving treatments and cures the agency helps to build remain top national priorities.

Thank you for your time.

Sample Note to Bring to Offices

Dropping off a handwritten or typed personal note (although handwritten is preferred!) is a more personal way to connect with lawmakers and their staff, putting a human face to the policies they help shape. We hope that you utilize the guide below to start the conversation!



1

Introduce yourself

Who are you and what do you do?

2

Tell your story

What impact has NIH funding had on your work? What is going to resonate with the lawmaker?

- If you are a researcher, describe how your work contributes to innovation, patient care, or public health.
- If you are a patient, describe how medical progress has helped you or could help you in the future.
- If you are a caregiver or advocate, describe the impact of research on your loved ones or your work.

3

Make the ask

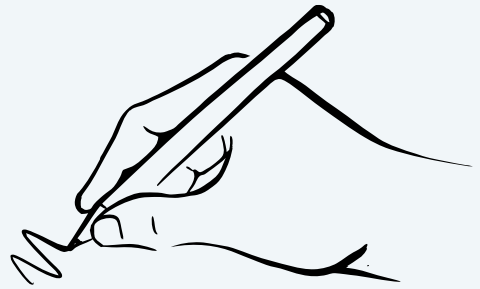
Connect your story to the need for robust NIH funding in Fiscal Year 2026.

4

General Tips

- Keep the note personal and brief.
- Know your audience and avoid jargon.
- Address only one issue in your letter.

SAMPLE LETTER



Dear Senator Padilla,

I am an MD/PhD student at UCSF, and I was awarded a National Cancer Institute (NCI) F31 fellowship to fund my PhD research on the genetics of advanced prostate cancer.

My research was focused on understanding the drivers of drug resistance to develop new treatments and diagnostics. To do this, we developed a new genetic system that allowed us to study how prostate tumors progress by breaking the machinery that normally repairs DNA mutations.

Our work would not have been possible without NIH funding, so I would like to urge you to work with your colleagues in the Senate to increase funding for NIH to \$51.3 billion or to the highest possible level. I greatly appreciate your past support on this issue! It means a lot to me and other early career scientists across the state.

Sincerely,

[Insert Handwritten Signature]

[Your Name]

[Your address, email, or other contact information if you'd like a reply]

Below are some additional resources that you can leave behind when dropping off your note. These resources provide additional details on how critical NIH is for advancing medical and health research.

[Take a Stand for Faster Medical Progress](#)

[How to Use NIH Leave Behind Template](#)

[NIH Leave Behind Template](#)

[NIH Leave Behind Example](#)

[Public Opinion Survey Results Infographic](#)

Sample Questions to Ask Your Lawmakers at Town Hall Events



Below are some sample questions to ask at town halls and other community events. The best questions reflect your own personal experiences and perspectives. Feel free to use the questions below as a starting point!

NIH Funding and the Budget

- Can we count on you to fight for strong funding for the NIH this year and oppose the 40% cut the president proposed?
- The administration is talking about a “rescissions package” that could take back funds already allocated to agencies by Congress. Will you speak out against any plan to take back money already promised to the NIH?
- Important research is being delayed because NIH funding is rolling out too slowly. What is Congress doing to speed things up?
- Patients are waiting on cures and treatments. How will you protect and grow the NIH budget, so progress isn’t stalled?
- Can we count on you to work across the aisle to protect medical research funding?

U.S. Leadership and Innovation

- NIH-supported research helps America stay ahead in science and medicine. How will you make sure we don’t fall behind other countries?
- Do you think the U.S. should keep leading the world in medical breakthroughs, and will you fight for the funding that makes that possible?
- Other countries are investing more in science. How will you make sure the U.S. stays competitive?
- NIH-supported research leads to jobs, new companies, and lifesaving innovation. Will you support policies that grow – not shrink – our research economy?

Impact of Cuts on Research

- What would you say to patients whose research studies might be delayed or canceled if NIH funding is cut?
- If research budgets shrink, what’s your plan for protecting jobs and innovation in our state/district?
- Cuts to NIH funding could mean fewer clinical trials and slower progress. How will you make sure that doesn’t happen?
- What do you say to families waiting for cures that depend on NIH-supported research?

Social Media

Engaging lawmakers through social media is a great way to spread the word about why medical and health research matter. Below are tips and sample posts for engaging with your legislators and your network on social media.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH YOUR LEGISLATORS

1. Find Your Lawmakers

Use Congress.gov's "[Find Your Members](#)" search to quickly access your congressional representatives' websites.

2. Find Official Social Media Handles

You can find social media handles for most members of Congress on their official congressional websites.

3. Tag Your Lawmakers

Tag them in your posts using the "@" symbol before typing their social media username on the applicable platform. For example, on X, Research!America's handle is @researchamerica; on Facebook, @ResearchAmerica.org; and on LinkedIn, @Research!America: Discovery. Innovation. Health.

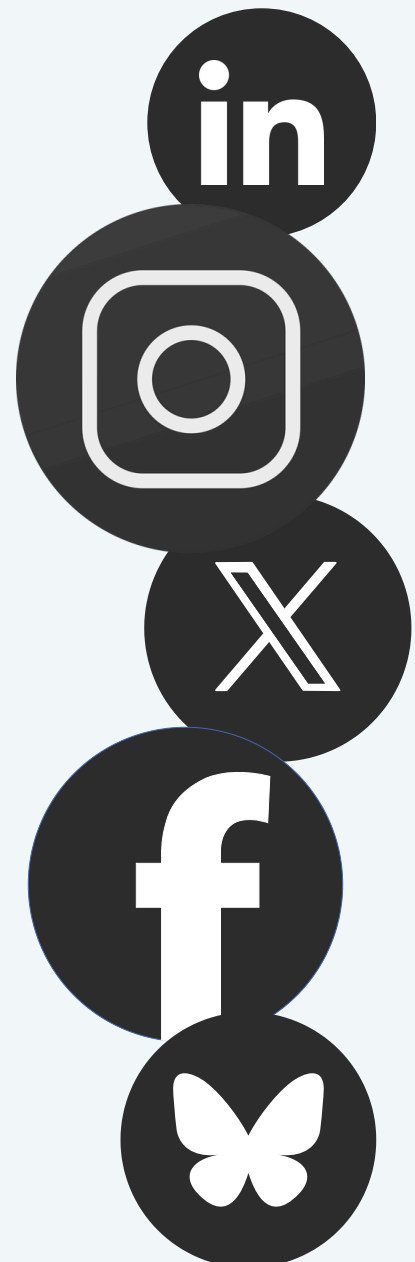
Note: If you start your tweet with "@," only the mentioned user will see it. Add a period (.) before the "@" symbol if you want your post to be visible to everyone.

4. Use Hashtags

Hashtags help your post reach more people who care about the same issues. Use #RAAugChallenge, plus tags like #Science, #FundScience, and #FundNIH.

5. Add Visuals

Posts with images, infographics, or videos get more shares and attention. **Download social media graphics [here](#).**

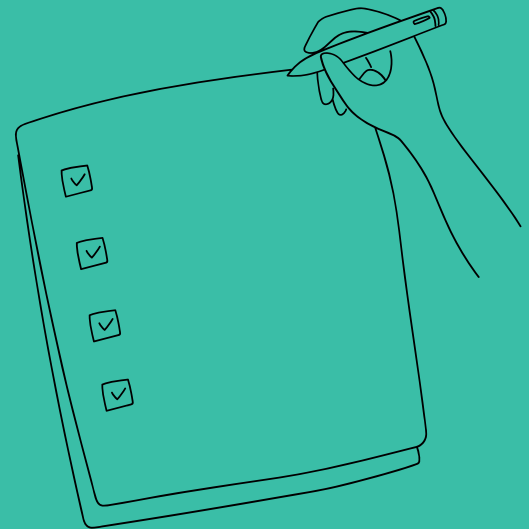


SAMPLE TWEETS TO ENGAGE LAWMAKERS

- 92% of Americans want the president and Congress to ensure faster medical progress. [insert lawmaker X handle here]: Please prioritize medical and public health research that saves lives. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH #FundScience
- For every \$1 spent on NIH-funded research, \$2.54 is generated in economic activity. [insert lawmaker X handle here], strong NIH funding is a win for patients and the economy. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH
- NIH is the largest funder of medical research worldwide. [insert lawmaker X handle here], your support ensures America can continue to lead in lifesaving innovation. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH
- NIH-supported research has helped drive a 34% decrease in cancer deaths since 1991, [insert lawmaker X handle here]. Let's keep the momentum going for patients and families. #RAAugChallenge #Science #FundNIH
- NIH-funded public-private partnerships helped in the creation of Narcan. [insert lawmaker X handle here], increased funding for NIH means faster solutions and more lives saved. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH
- NIH-funded research has led to the development of 2 drugs to slow the progression of Alzheimer's, which affects nearly 7 million Americans over 65. [insert lawmaker X handle here] bold funding means faster breakthroughs for patients counting on progress. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH

SAMPLE LINKEDIN, FACEBOOK, AND INSTAGRAM POSTS

- Today, more than ever, science and technology (S&T) plays a profoundly important role in the health, prosperity, and security of the American people and populations across the globe. Public opinion is aligned with increased funding for our nation's research and public health agencies. In fact, a national public opinion survey commissioned by Research!America found that most Americans (91%) say it is important for the U.S. to be a global leader in S&T, and 78% are concerned that China will surpass the U.S. as the world's leading S&T power. Prioritizing S&T leadership will lead to continued benefits for Americans now and in the future. #RAAugChallenge #FundScience #FundNIH
- NIH-funded research saves lives, drives medical breakthroughs, and fuels job creation in communities across all 50 states. At less than 1% of the federal budget, NIH delivers an outsized return on investment, generating \$2.54 in economic activity for every \$1 invested. Patients and families deserve research that provides treatments and cures for debilitating diseases. Prioritize NIH funding to keep advancing the health and prosperity of all Americans. #RAAugChallenge #FundNIH

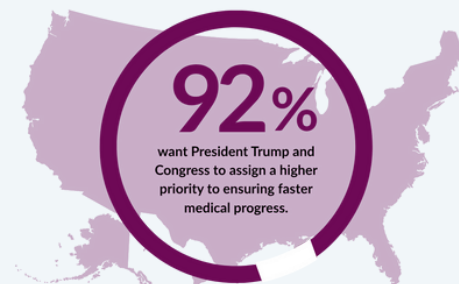


Public Opinion Survey Graphics

How important is it for President Trump and the new Congress to assign a higher priority to ensuring faster medical progress?

92% of respondents said it is important for Congress to ensure faster medical progress.

Of all Americans:
(regardless of political affiliation)



**URGE YOUR LAWMAKERS TO
SUPPORT FY26 NIH FUNDING**

Source: A ResearchAmerica survey of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025.



How important do you think it is that the U.S. is a global leader in research to improve health?

9 in 10 Americans say it's important for the U.S. to be a global leader in health research.

Of all Americans:
(regardless of political affiliation)



**URGE YOUR LAWMAKERS TO
SUPPORT FY26 NIH FUNDING**

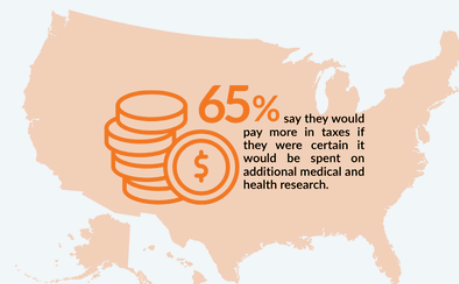
Source: A ResearchAmerica survey of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025.



Would you be willing to pay \$1 per week more in taxes if you were certain that all of the money would be spent on additional medical and health research?

65% of Americans say they would be willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes for additional medical and health research.

Of all Americans:
(regardless of political affiliation)



**URGE YOUR LAWMAKERS TO
SUPPORT FY26 NIH FUNDING**

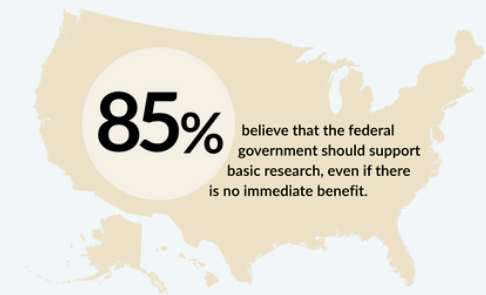
Source: A ResearchAmerica survey of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025.



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic scientific research that advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.

85% of Americans support basic research, even if there is no immediate benefit.

Of all Americans:
(regardless of political affiliation)



**URGE YOUR LAWMAKERS TO
SUPPORT FY26 NIH FUNDING**

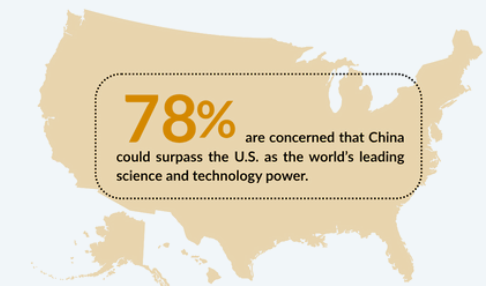
Source: A ResearchAmerica survey of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025.



How concerned are you with the possibility of China surpassing the U.S. as the world's leading science and technology power?

78% of Americans are concerned that China could surpass the U.S. as the world's leading science and technology power.

Of all Americans:
(regardless of political affiliation)



**URGE YOUR LAWMAKERS TO
SUPPORT FY26 NIH FUNDING**

Source: A ResearchAmerica survey of U.S. adults conducted in partnership with Zogby Analytics in Dec. 2024 and Jan. 2025.



Download these graphics for LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, or X/Twitter [here](#).