



March 21, 2017

Nominee for Agriculture Secretary Set for Confirmation Hearing on Thursday

President Donald Trump's (R) nominee for Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, will testify before the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee on Thursday at 10:00 A.M. Perdue, former Governor of Georgia and a veterinarian by training, has been tapped for the highest post at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) which oversees various issues of importance to NABR members, including the Animal Welfare Act. He is the last nominee of Trump's Cabinet to be granted a hearing. According to [coverage in POLITICO](#), it does not appear that Democrats will object to his nomination at Thursday's hearing. Upon receiving approval by the Agriculture Committee, the full Senate will vote on Perdue's confirmation as Secretary, although a date for the vote is yet to be determined.

Maryland Mandatory Research Animal Adoption Bills Fail to Pass

Two bills mandating the adoption of former research animals that were introduced in the Maryland state legislature earlier this year failed to advance before Monday's crossover deadline. [Senate Bill 420](#) and [House Bill 528](#) did not meet the deadline, the date any bill introduced must pass its originating chamber of introduction. While both bills were granted hearings, S.B.420 and H.B.528 were not passed in committee and never saw consideration by the full House or Senate. [NABR and others submitted testimony](#) in opposition to these bills and we appreciate the efforts of those who made their voices heard. The bills would have required research facilities to work with third party organizations to find homes for research animals after completion of studies.

Similar bills have also failed to pass in Iowa, Maine and North Dakota. Bills remain active in Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Texas.

Opposition efforts, such as written and oral testimony to state legislatures, have played an important role in stopping these bills. [Click here for NABR's toolkit](#) to learn more about the bills and how you can get engaged.

Cuts to NIH in President's Budget Proposal Receive Congressional Criticism

[As we mentioned in last week's NABR Update](#), President Trump's budget blueprint contains an 18% decrease in federal funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This has sparked criticism and concern from Congressional Republicans.

Last week, Representative Tom Cole (R-OK), a member of the important House Appropriations Committee and former chair of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and

Related Agencies, [told MSNBC on "Morning Joe"](#) that the cut is "very short-sighted... You're much more likely to die in a pandemic than a terrorist attack. And so that's part of the defense of the country as well."

On Sunday, Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) [stated on Meet the Press with Chuck Todd](#): "One of the most disturbing parts of the President's budget is his slashing the funding for the National Institutes of Health. We have been making tremendous progress in increasing NIH's budget and that has helped us develop effective treatments and new cures for very expensive diseases. If we're serious about reducing healthcare costs, the last thing that we should be doing is cutting the budget for biomedical research."

However, changes to this budget will likely occur as Congress must next review it before being finalized. NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D. was supposed to testify in front of the House Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee today but the hearing has been postponed for Wednesday, March 29. Watch your inbox for more relevant information about the federal budget.

NABR Introduces Federal Legislation Tracking Chart for Members

To help assist NABR members and keep them informed of happenings on Capitol Hill, [NABR has created a bill tracking summary chart](#) for federal bills that have been introduced in the 115th Congress. The chart contains links to bill texts, bill summaries, and pertinent information such as status, committee referrals and votes. Currently NABR is monitoring 12 federal bills of interest to animal research, including [S.503](#), [H.R.1368](#), and [H.R.816](#), the "Federal Accountability in Chemical Testing (FACT) Act." [Please click here to view NABR's federal bill tracking summary chart.](#)

New York Court Hears Oral Arguments in Another Animal Personhood Case

Last week the New York County Supreme Court, Appellate Division, First Judicial Department heard oral arguments from Stephen Wise, founder and president of the Nonhuman Rights Project (NhRP), for personhood on behalf of two chimpanzees. Wise argued that the chimpanzees should be granted *habeas corpus* and that they should be sent to a sanctuary because of their intellect. According to [news reports](#), judges asked tough questions including, "Why isn't this issue better dealt with by the legislature?" To read news coverage on the hearing, [please click here](#). [NhRP expects](#) a ruling in 5-8 weeks. New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, has twice denied NhRP's request to hear the case. They have lost four times in other, lower courts in New York state.