

The AMERICAN ASSOCIATION of
IMMUNOLOGISTS



President
Marc K. Jenkins, Ph.D.

October 22, 2013

Vice President
Linda A. Sherman, Ph.D.

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Institutes of Health
Building 1, Room 126
One Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20814

Past President
Gail A. Bishop, Ph.D.

Secretary-Treasurer
Mitchell Kronenberg, Ph.D.

Richard K. Nakamura, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health
Rockledge Building 2, Room 303
6701 Rockledge Drive
Bethesda, MD 20817

Councillors
Dan R. Littman, M.D., Ph.D.
Arlene H. Sharpe, M.D., Ph.D.
Wayne M. Yokoyama, M.D.
JoAnne L. Flynn, Ph.D.

Executive Director
M. Michele Hogan, Ph.D.

by email to francis.collins@nih.gov and richard.nakamura@nih.gov

Dear Drs. Collins and Nakamura:

I am writing on behalf of The American Association of Immunologists (AAI), the largest professional association of immunologists in the world, representing more than 7,700 basic and clinical immunologists. The vast majority of our members receive funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to support their research.

AAI members are deeply concerned about the enormously deleterious impact the recent government shutdown will have on current and future NIH grantees. They also understand that the shutdown has imposed great hardship on NIH staff and the work they do. We recognize that the 16-day hiatus, and the additional time needed to decide how best to resume activities, has been a burden and challenge for all involved. We are very concerned, however, that the approach that NIH has announced, which would result in a delay to grant applicants of an entire cycle (delaying both peer review and funding decisions for Cycle II applicants to Cycle III) could be disastrous for many scientists, particularly those who may not have other grant funding or whose employers may not be able to offer interim support.

I am writing to urge you to consider ways to expedite the peer review and funding of applications that have been delayed by the shutdown. AAI would prefer to see the immediate resumption of study sections and the rescheduling, to the extent feasible, of those that were cancelled. As an alternative, although AAI does not generally support the use of reviews which are conducted remotely, we urge you to arrange and then offer remote reviews to those applicants who prefer not to wait until the next review cycle (an additional three months).

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for NIH leaders and staff. Nevertheless, we are also acutely aware that the careers of many scientists may be in jeopardy at this time, and urge you to use whatever extraordinary measures may be necessary under the circumstances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc Jenkins'.

Marc K. Jenkins, Ph.D
President