January 25, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to the U.S. scientific enterprise, which was evidenced when you signed the America COMPETES Act into law on January 4. We at the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) especially appreciate your support of new scientists.

In your FY 2011 National Institutes of Health (NIH) Budget, you addressed one of our primary concerns by asking for a 6-percent increase in the NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) training stipend. The average postdoctoral compensation remains unacceptably low. Increasing this stipend is crucial, as the majority of research institutions across the United States use the NRSA stipend scale as a guideline for compensation of postdoctoral researchers.

The NPA hopes that you will continue to push for increased NRSA stipends in your FY 2012 Budget. For our part, we will continue to advocate for increased funding for research and development for the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and other Federal agencies who lead U.S. research efforts. We consider such funding an investment in the economic health of our country.

The NPA is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization whose mission is to advance the U.S. research enterprise by maximizing the effectiveness of the research community and enhancing the quality of the postdoctoral experience for all participants. We represent some 180 research institutions and the 40,000 postdoctoral researchers, or “postdocs,” at these institutions, but we advocate for all of the postdocs in the United States.
The constituents of the NPA especially appreciated this statement in the 2011 budget narrative: “This increase sends a clear message to both existing and ‘would be’ scientists that their efforts are valued.” We as a country must be able to retain the best and brightest new scientists in the United States. The commitment of your administration to securing America’s place as a global leader in scientific research is applauded by the NPA.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zoe Fonseca-Kelly, Ph.D.
Chair, NPA Board of Directors
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Pennsylvania

Cathee Johnson Phillips, M.A.
Executive Director, NPA