



Science Policy News

News from the intersection of entomology and public policy

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ESA Efforts Help to Pass Tick Act as Part of FY 2020 Appropriations

On December 19, Congress passed its \$1.37 trillion fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations spending package, which included the [Kay Hagan Tick Act](#), legislation that aims to combat the escalating burden of vector-borne disease (VBD). ESA led a concerted, multi-organizational advocacy effort that ultimately contributed to the passage of this legislation.



The legislation will strengthen coordination of activities across the Department of Health and Human Services and its agency partners, develop and maintain a national plan for responding to VBD, reauthorize funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Regional Centers of Excellence in VBD for five years, and authorize a cooperative agreement through CDC to support state health department efforts to improve surveillance, diagnosis, and education for VBD. All of these advancements will allow those in entomological professions to better track, control, and reduce the spread of VBD in the United States.

The bill is named in honor of former Senator Kay Hagan of North Carolina, who passed away due to complications from tick-borne Powassan virus in the fall of 2019. In early January, ESA sent [letters](#) thanking each member, in both the House and Senate and in both parties, that signed on to co-sponsor the legislation and whose office ESA met with. More information on the rest of the FY 2020 Appropriations package can be found below.

ESA Convenes First Meeting of Vector-Borne Disease Network

On December 3, ESA convened the first official meeting of the Vector-Borne Disease Network (VBDN). Formed in May 2019, VBDN is a stakeholder group of nonprofit organizations including membership and trade associations, vector control groups, and educational institutions such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Regional Centers of Excellence. The group advocates for vector-borne disease (VBD) research and management funding, seeks to connect the community of vector professionals, and envisions a world where human suffering from disease transmitted by arthropod vectors is reduced. ESA leads the effort and assumes an organizing role in developing and sustaining the network.

The purpose of the inaugural meeting was to discuss the coalition's goals and agenda for the next year and to hear directly from representatives of CDC. Sue Visser, DrPH, and Ben Beard, Ph.D., officials within the CDC's National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases, provided an overview of the VBD-related challenges facing the agency and the policies they are crafting to address them. Among these strategies is a domestic framework to clarify the roles that CDC and its agency partners will play in combating VBD. Following those presentations, VBDN also heard from Frederik Seelig, Ph.D., director of the Global Vector Hub (GVH) housed within the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, who introduced the coalition to his organization. GVH is building a global vector control database that relies on the user community to share its data and findings that can be used to better house resources for researchers and stakeholders. [Learn more about the Vector-Borne Disease Network.](#)

Member Comments Sought on Insecticide Resistance Management and Invasive Species Position Statements

ESA is beginning the process of revising two position statements and evaluating whether to revise another, and the Society seeks member input on all three. ESA position statements are statements made on behalf of Society members, and comments are only accepted from ESA members in good standing, as identified by your email address or membership ID number. Once approved by the Governing Board, ESA position statements are valid for four years (unless otherwise revised or removed by the Board). About six months before expiration, the Society initiates a review process to consider if the statement should remain as active policy for the Society. ESA member input is a critical part of this process.

The position statements on [insecticide resistance management](#) and [insecticide resistance management in genetically modified crops](#) are both slated for revision, and ESA members are asked to recommend possible changes.

Additionally, the ESA Science Policy Committee seeks input on the position statement on [invasive species](#)—specifically, whether it should be renewed as-is; edited for content, clarity, or new information; or retired.

The deadline for comments on all three of these statements is **February 7**. [Submit your comments on ESA position statements.](#)

ESA Weighs In on Open-Access Issues

In mid-December, news emerged that the Trump Administration is contemplating an executive order (EO) on open access that would allegedly remove the current 12-month embargo on federally funded research data. In response, ESA joined close to 60 stakeholder groups to sign onto a [letter](#) encouraging the administration to engage with stakeholder communities to determine the best way to balance the goals of open access with the needs of the scientific community.

ESA Joins Letter Calling on Congress to Finalize FY 2020 Spending Bills

Early in December, ESA signed onto a [letter](#) circulated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) calling on Congress to finalize FY 2020 appropriations. The letter commended Congressional appropriators for their work in both the House and Senate bills that robustly funded research and development while reminding legislators that any delay in approving final funding measures stymies the nation's ability to "address fundamental challenges such as chronic and infectious diseases, food and energy security, cybersecurity and natural disasters."

Congressional Updates and Other News

Congress Passes Final FY 2020 Appropriations

On December 19, Congress passed its \$1.37 trillion FY 2020 appropriations spending package, averting a government shutdown that would have occurred the following day and stabilizing federal funding for the remainder of the fiscal year.



The spending package abides by the funding levels established in the two-year budget agreement reached in July 2019 with \$738 billion for defense spending—an increase of \$22 billion or 3 percent above FY 2019 levels—and \$632 billion for non-defense spending—an increase of \$35 billion, or 4.5 percent, above FY 2019 enacted levels.

FY 2020 appropriations boosted funding for all federal agencies that support research, and most science and technology research and development programs across the federal government will see significant increases. Among the biggest winners was the National Institutes of Health, while the National Science Foundation, Department of Defense science

and technology programs, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative received more modest increases. For more info, see "[Analysis of the FY 2020 Minibus Appropriations Bills: Implications for Research, Higher Education, and Academic Medicine](#)," prepared by ESA government-relations partner Lewis-Burke Associates.

Federal Agency and Administration Updates and News

Administration Identifies Nominee for Next NSF Director

The Trump Administration has [announced](#) its nomination of Sethuraman "Panch" Panchanathan, Ph.D., executive vice president at Arizona State University, to be the next director of the National Science Foundation following the end of the term of France Córdova, Ph.D., this spring. Panchanathan's nomination could signal several changes at NSF, including whether (and how strongly) he will continue to focus on the "[10 Big Ideas](#)" championed by his predecessor. ESA will closely monitor any changes to NSF's leadership and ensure the Society's priorities are shared when appropriate.

Panchanathan's nomination has been met with a warm reception by the broader research community. Córdova and Diane L. Souvaine, Ph.D., chair of the National Science Board, both [expressed](#) their support for the nominee, highlighting Panchanathan's leadership at Arizona State and his service on the National Science Board. Panchanathan still faces a potentially long and uncertain road to becoming NSF Director; he must be officially confirmed by the Senate, where other agency leadership nominations, including that of former ESA President and current USDA Deputy Under Secretary Scott Hutchins, Ph.D., have stalled or expired due to various political disputes.

Interior Moving Forward With BLM Move

The Department of Interior is continuing to take steps to relocate the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) headquarters from Washington, DC, to Grand Junction, Colorado, on an aggressive timeline. On December 12, the 30-day period concluded for BLM employees to decide whether to keep their positions and accept the relocation. Of the 300 people who work at BLM in Washington, up to 159 positions would be shifted to the new headquarters in Colorado while the others would be moved to offices in western states including Utah and Wyoming. Those accepting early retirement and buyout offers have until the end of January to leave. While the agency has not yet released formal data on departures, early [estimates](#) suggest that the majority of relocation-eligible employees are rejecting their relocation offers.

Representative Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ), chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, is strongly opposed to the move, [saying](#) that the agency has not appropriately justified the need for the move and positing that Interior is trying to undermine the agency's effectiveness. Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt and Acting BLM Director William Perry Pendley have defended the plan as a way to move employees closer to the people and lands that they serve. Chairman Grijalva has acknowledged that those opposed to the move are unlikely to be able to stop it, but he has committed to continuing his oversight of the relocation, including by issuing subpoenas for information on BLM's justification of the move. In response to Rep. Grijalva's request, the Government Accountability Office agreed to review the Bureau's relocation. There is bipartisan support for the relocation by members of the Colorado delegation. Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO) has been a champion of this move. Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) has supported the move as well but has taken issue with BLM's process.

The Administration has not yet nominated a permanent director for BLM. On January 2, Secretary Bernhardt [extended](#) Pendley's tenure as acting director for a second three-month period until April 3. Environmentalists and conservationists oppose Pendley's leadership of a bureau that manages public lands, citing his personal support for [selling off public land](#).

Learn More About ESA Science Policy

ESA Science Policy Program Links

- [ESA Science Policy Initiatives](#)
- [Position Statements and Fact Sheets](#)
- [ESA in DC: Issues We Track](#)
- [Science Policy Fellows Program](#)
- [Partnerships and Coalitions](#)
- [Advocacy Tools: Get Involved!](#)
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