

NIH to get a \$2 billion funding boost as Congress rebuffs Trump's call for cuts

WASHINGTON — The National Institutes of Health will get a \$2 billion funding boost over the next five months, under a bipartisan spending deal reached late Sunday night in Congress. [The agreement](#) marks a sharp rejection of President Trump's [proposal to cut](#) \$1.2 billion from the medical research agency in the current fiscal year.

The deal does not address funding for 2018, when Trump has called for a slashing the NIH's budget by about a fifth, or [\\$5.8 billion](#).

But it sends a clear signal that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle prioritize funding for medical research and intend to honor the agreements laid out in the 21st Century Cures Act, a bipartisan bill that called for raising NIH funding and speeding approvals of new drugs and medical devices. This will be the [second year running](#) that Congress gives a \$2 billion funding bump to the agency, which funds medical research across the country.

“The omnibus is in sharp contrast to President Trump’s dangerous plans to steal billions from lifesaving medical research, instead increasing funding for the NIH by \$2 billion,” House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi said in a statement.

The roughly \$1 trillion spending agreement, which funds the government through the end of September, also more than quadruples funds to fight opioid addiction. That money — about \$800 million total, up from \$150 million in the last budget — will be divided among opioid addiction programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

In addition, the plan permanently extends a health insurance program for coal miners, which had been on the [brink of shutting down](#). It preserves federal funding for Planned Parenthood, for now, though Republicans are still expected to push hard to eliminate that in the 2018 budget.

And in a victory for Democrats, Puerto Rico’s health commissioner announced on her Facebook page that the budget includes \$295 million to shore up the territory’s Medicaid program, which should help avert cuts that could have resulted in major coverage losses.

Science isn't dead in Washington. At least not yet

The NIH funding hike includes an extra \$400 million to research Alzheimer's disease and an additional \$476 million for the National Cancer Institute. And it boosts spending on two of former President Barack Obama's [big science projects](#): the Precision Medicine Initiative, which will get an increase of \$120 million as it seeks to [recruit volunteers](#) for genetic testing and health tracking; and the BRAIN Initiative, which will get an extra \$110 million to support work mapping the human brain.

The spending agreement is a firm repudiation of the Trump administration's vision of a much leaner federal research program.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price [had suggested](#) at a congressional hearing that the NIH budget could be cut significantly without harming medical research by reducing grants for "indirect costs" — the federal dollars that help research universities pay for utility bills, heating costs, pricey equipment, and other expenses that support their biomedical labs. University administrators, who make up a powerful lobbying group, [did not take kindly](#) to that suggestion.