



Friday, March 13, 2009

Dear Representative Baldwin,

I respectfully request that you sponsor an appropriation in the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010 of \$6.5 million to continue funding by the U.S. Army Medical Institute of Chemical Defense for botulinum neurotoxin research. Botulinum neurotoxins are the most deadly substances to humans, and neither the Army nor the nation as a whole have practical antagonists (antidotes) for soldiers who are attacked during combat or citizens who are attacked by terrorists using botulinum neurotoxins. The Army Institute's mission is to identify antagonists to counter the terrible effects of botulinum neurotoxins. The funds that Congress has provided in previous fiscal years have led to tremendous technical breakthroughs in developing assays (tests) for these neurotoxins that are rapid and no longer require killing animals, which are also orders of magnitude less expensive per test than procedures currently used by the Army. I understand that the Institute is quite pleased with the technical progress that BioSentinel LLC has made so far. In fact, the Commander of the Institute has written a letter to me which I am submitting to you on his intent to continue the research collaboration in fiscal year 2010 if funds are available.

The amount BioSentinel has brought to your attention is the amount needed in fiscal year 2010 to address all Army requirements at a prudent pace. If funded at this level, the Institute would be able to make significant progress in screening drugs that might counteract botulinum neurotoxins, because BioSentinel's new assays allow unprecedented higher rates of testing and more comprehensive analysis that has existed in the past. Included in the amount requested is a significant increase to allow the initiation of actual development of new drugs – none exist today that are practical for use by the Army in combat situations.

I understand that the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, to whom the funds would be appropriated, has not been able to expand its botulism research program due to overall defense budget constraints caused in part by the need to assign priority to overseas operations. All funds for this program are executed under an existing Cooperative Research and Development Agreement that the Army signed with BioSentinel, and grants to BioSentinel are made only after a rigorous merit-based peer review. Funds that Congress provides for this program finance federal government costs in the U.S. Army Medical Institute of Chemical Defense, the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Laboratory in Wisconsin, and to operate BioSentinel's laboratory at the University's Research Park that consists of 7 employees and 5 collaborators. Most of them have advanced degrees and hold very technical salaried positions. Funding in fiscal year 2010

at or near the amount requested would allow BioSentinel to quickly hire more scientists in Madison in order to accelerate the drug development process.

BioSentinel's research program is strongly supported by the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, the Wisconsin Department of Commerce, and the Marshfield Clinic. This funding takes cutting-edge technology out of the University of Wisconsin and makes it available to the federal government in a practical form to protect our citizens and soldiers, improving their health-care if attacked by a terrorist or during combat operations, and providing high-tech jobs in the University's Research Park in Madison. There are potential long term benefits in health care, to the University, and to future industry in Madison if this work can one-day be expanded to address medical uses of botulinum neurotoxins in novel new ways.

I am very grateful for and humbled by your past outstanding support of the Army and BioSentinel, and your continued leadership on bringing modern tools to bear to protect the nation's soldiers and citizens during this dangerous era of terrorism. I respectfully request that you and other Members of Congress consider supporting continued funding for "USAMRICD Neurotoxin Research" when you deliberate the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2010.

We thank you.



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