



NPI advocacy efforts promote R&D funding, workforce training and optics and photonics for infrastructure

Good morning, and Happy Spring!

Since the beginning of 2017, our community has made great strides towards advancing our goals in Washington, DC. Over the past few months, as the agenda of the new Congress and administration took shape, we worked to tailor our top priorities, building on the successes of 2016, while refashioning our legislative goals to help ensure additional victories under the country's new leadership.

We have closely monitored the proposals discussed by Speaker Ryan, Senate Majority Leader McConnell and President Trump, and the themes of American competitiveness and job growth have been consistent throughout the president's first 100 days in office. By all accounts, this administration is intent on investing in America's infrastructure and military capabilities, increasing security levels at the southern border and focusing on issues relating to workforce development and job training. All of these issues have significant optics and photonics-related components that will provide us with a variety of opportunities to advance our cause as policymakers look to put their agenda into action in the coming months.

Our community has also enjoyed a new wave of enthusiasm in recent months – energy that is already being channeled into action. On April 26, a record number of volunteers descended on our nation's capital for the annual Congressional Visits Day (CVD). During their time in Washington, these volunteers from across the country held meetings with more than 70 congressional offices to discuss the importance of three particular issues that will be significant components of the larger debates taking place on Capitol Hill in the coming months:



1. **[Research and Development](#)**: Given the new Republican leadership's desire to tighten the federal government's belt, our outreach and engagement has been aimed at preserving funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science and the Department of Defense's (DOD) Science and Technology Program. Optics and photonics benefit greatly from federal R&D investments and, in turn, contribute to innovations that reach beyond scientific discovery. Members of Congress were very receptive to this message and our efforts to communicate the vast importance of funding for these programs. In the recently passed omnibus spending bill that will fund the government through the remainder of FY 2017, many agencies – notably NIH – actually received [increased funding](#).
2. **[Career and Technical Education](#)**: As Congress considers primary and higher education reforms, we plan to continue our advocacy efforts to ensure legislative language that will support career and technical education, internships and workforce development as it relates to optics and photonics. Inclusion of optics and photonics work-based learning opportunities such as internships was included in the Senate-introduced Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act reauthorization bill in the 114th Congress. The NPI currently supports reauthorization of the CTE Act in this Congress, and requests that optics and photonics technical training opportunities between community colleges and US industry be included in legislation.
3. **[Infrastructure](#)**: The administration has made clear that new investments in civil infrastructure will be a cornerstone of President Trump's efforts to create jobs and invigorate the economy. With a multitude of examples of the important role photonics can play in safety and efficiency in infrastructure, we eagerly started to share our message with lawmakers as they begin deliberations on legislation to address this critical issue over the remainder of this year.

After several weeks of heightened engagement and enthusiasm—between the March for Science and CVD—many of you may be asking, how you can remain active in the coming months. There are a number of ways to stay involved and to raise more awareness of the issues important to our community, including:

- Organizing in-district visits, using [this handy guide](#), for members of Congress during recesses, when lawmakers have the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of investments in photonics research and development, something the NPI's staff is happy to assist with at every step of the process;
- Writing to your state and federal government officials and representatives;
- Being active on social media and publishing op-eds and letters to the editor for local news outlets; and
- Visiting your lawmakers year-round in Washington, DC. Please be sure to contact the NPI so that we can schedule meetings on Capitol Hill, if possible.

Outside of the legislative priorities listed above, the NPI remains committed to continuing its support of AIM Photonics and achieving the goals of the Cancer Moonshot.

- In April, AIM Photonics announced a new collaboration with IBM, bringing the technology giant into the science consortium and announcing a patent and intellectual property licensing agreement. This exciting news not only adds to the progress and credibility of AIM Photonics, but also demonstrates a growing recognition within the technology sector and business community of the importance of optics and photonics.

- On April 12, Dr. Eva Sevick, chair of the NPI Biophotonics Task Force, hosted the NPI Workshop on Strategies for Improving Early Detection of Cancer and Response to Therapies through Imaging Technologies in Rockville, Maryland. The event brought together leading researchers from clinical research hospitals, government agencies, technology innovators, academic leaders and patient advocates to discuss opportunities to accelerate detection and treatment response monitoring of the most deadly cancers with medical imaging. The workshop's organizers plan to develop a technology roadmap summarizing recommendations for public and private investments in key areas of technology development, something I know we all look forward to seeing.

Finally, in conjunction with CVD, the NPI held its quarterly Steering Committee meeting on April 24 in Washington, DC, where we were pleased to honor Dr. Larry Goldberg, a lifelong scientific champion and a critical voice in the founding of the NPI. Dr. Goldberg's role in securing the NSF's support for the creation of an NPI was an essential step for our community, without which so much of our progress over the last four years would not have been possible. We are immensely grateful for all of his contributions and look forward to continuing to work with him in the months and years to come.



After such an impressive display of commitment, determination and enthusiasm over the last few weeks, I look forward to seeing this level of engagement continue over the coming weeks and months. To learn about becoming more involved in the NPI's efforts or for help in planning an in-district visit or a trip to Washington, DC, visit www.lightourfuture.org or contact Laura Kolton at 202.416.1499 or Krisinda Plenkovich at 360.483.8786.

Sincerely,

Alan Willner,

Chair, National Photonics Initiative

Contact Us

The NPI is interested in hearing from you. Are you interested in joining our efforts? Do you have questions? Need additional information? Please contact Laura Kolton at (202) 416 1499 or lkolto@osa.org, or Krisinda Plenkovich at (360) 685 5518 or krisindap@spie.org.

Please visit the NPI website for more information: www.lightourfuture.org.



www.LightOurFuture.org