

DRAFT

November 19, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20514

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20514

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for an Omnibus Spending Bill and Increased Funding for Organ Donation and Transplantation Programs

Dear Senators Reid & McConnell, Representatives Pelosi and Boehner:

With the current Continuing Resolution (CR) set to expire on December 3, 2010, we understand you are in the midst of deciding how to proceed with the fiscal 2011 appropriations bills. The undersigned organizations urge you to support an omnibus spending bill rather than proceeding with a continuing resolution. We understand that the cost of both options is largely the same, but an omnibus bill would have the advantage of preserving the spending priorities of Members on Congress on both sides of the aisle that have been negotiated to date for FY 2011.

We applaud the Congress and the Appropriation committee on the long process of deliberation that has resulted in the Omnibus. This bill provides important decisions and guidance relevant to all the programs of the government which will be lost if the Congress now elects to use a CR to fund the government. One program area important to the organ transplant community offers a small example of the excellent bipartisan and non controversial progress made by the Committee that would only be lost under a CR.

For example, the additional funding for the Division of Transplantation within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), which is funded through the Labor, Health & Human Services and Education appropriations bill. The Senate bill includes an increase of \$2 million and we strongly support this new funding to continue to address the tragic shortage of organs for donation in this country. With over 100,000 people on the national organ donor waiting list and approximately 16,000 people dying each year awaiting a donor organ, this increase in funding is critical to saving lives and the quality of life of those in need of a transplant.

Your support of these federal programs translates into more organs available for transplant, thereby reducing waiting list rolls and generating savings to the Medicare program by reducing the need for kidney dialysis. Specifically, programs funded through the Division of Transplantation expand paired kidney donation opportunities among multiple intended donors. They also allow the reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses for living donors whose low incomes may otherwise prohibit them from being able to donate.

We appreciate your leadership in the federal budget process and, in turn, in the federal organ donation and transplantation programs run by HRSA. Only with adequate funding will we be able to have a positive impact on the lives of organ donors and recipients and see the lengthy organ donor waiting lists meaningfully decrease.

Once again, we request you to please pass an omnibus spending package for the entire fiscal year rather than opting for a continuing resolution. Thank you again for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

American Society of Transplant Surgeons
(Add Transplant Roundtable Members here)