



# Women First Research Coalition

## WFRC Fourth Quarter 2025 Activities Update

### WFRC and SWHR Host Women's Health Research Roundtable

On December 15, WFRC in partnership with the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR), hosted a kick-off meeting for staff for members of Congress who lead on women's health issues. The purpose of this working group is to bring together staffers working for members of Congress with interest in women's health research and/or legislation on conditions that are under resourced in women's health. The goal is to meet regularly and share legislative and policy priorities to identify collaborative opportunities in advocating for and advancing women's health research.

Going forward, WFRC and SWHR plan to bring this group together quarterly and provide a platform where information regarding women's health issues can be shared for better awareness and education, as well as for identifying legislative opportunities to build bipartisan support across chambers.

### WFRC Fall Hill Day

The WFRC held a successful virtual hill day on Friday, October 31. Staff scheduled 30 meetings with Hill staff that were attended by 18 WFRC members from 12 states. WFRC's goals for the virtual hill day were to request that Congress support federal funding for women's health research, educate members of Congress about the importance of women's health research, and develop relationships with members of Congress and their staff. Specifically, we requested that Congress support at least \$48.7 billion for the NIH, and to support women's health research report language that was included in the FY 2026 Senate Labor-HHS report. We specifically focused on the need to support the research workforce, including through the BIRCIWH, WRHR and RSDP programs.

### March Virtual Hill Day

Virtual hill visits will be held on Monday, March 9, 2026.

## **Legislative Activities**

### Update on Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations

On November 12, Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR), ending the longest government shutdown in history. The CR will keep the government funded at the same level as fiscal year (FY) 2025 through January 30. Congress also passed a minibus appropriations package that fully funds Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, the Legislative Branch, and the Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for FY 2026. However, the remaining nine bills, including the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations bill, still need to be passed.

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#### **SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS**

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS • AMERICAN GYNECOLOGICAL & OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY • AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE • AMERICAN UROGYNECOLOGIC SOCIETY • COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY CHAIRS IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • INFECTIOUS DISEASE SOCIETY FOR OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY • NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN GENERAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING • SOCIETY OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY AND INFERTILITY • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE INVESTIGATION • SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

On December 18, Congress left for the Holidays postponing movement on any government funding packages until the new year. Once they return from the holiday recess, lawmakers will have less than a month to finalize spending bills before the January 30 deadline.

Despite Senate Republicans coming to an agreement on the five-bill package including appropriations bills for Defense; Labor-HHS-Education; Transportation, Housing, Urban Development; Interior; and Commerce, Justice, and Science, Senate Democrats were unable to move the minibuss. The Senate leadership seem optimistic about the passage of full FY 2026 funding for these appropriations bills before January 30, but Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) spoke of potential full-year CRs for other funding bill not included in the five-bill minibuss.

On the House side, the House Appropriations Committee chair, Tom Cole (R-OK) stated that a five-bill minibuss is too large to move in the House and plans to move the remaining appropriations bills in sets of three, with the Defense and Labor-HHS bills likely being the last to leave the House. Chair Cole continues to express interest in passing all of the appropriations bills before January 30 and not passing another CR.

As a reminder, below is the FY 2026 budget and policy proposals from the House and Senate:

	<b>House FY26</b>	<b>Senate FY26</b>
<b>NIH</b>	\$47.845 billion	\$48.7 billion
<b><i>Eunice Kennedy Shriver</i> National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)</b>	\$1.759 billion	\$1.779 billion
<b>Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH)</b>	\$100,000,000, without specifically including funding for BIRCWH program	\$106,480,000, of which \$10 million for BIRCWH program
<b>Structural changes for NIH</b>	The Committee looks forward to working with the authorizing committees on any reforms to NIH	Does not adopt as proposed in the President’s Budget
<b>Multi-year funding</b>	N/A	prohibits the NIH from awarding multi-year grants unless the same number of grants are issued as FY 2024
<b>Indirect Costs</b>	limits F&A costs to 30 percent	prohibit the administration’s proposed cuts to facilities and administrative (F&A) costs

These differences will need to be worked out as the House and Senate conference their respective bills in January.

### **NIH IMPROVE Act**

Senators Katie Britt (R-AL) and Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Representatives Lauren Underwood (D-IL) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) re-introduced the NIH IMPROVE Act, This bill provides critical funding for the IMPROVE initiative through the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), which is designed to support research dedicated to reducing preventable maternal morbidity and mortality and improving health for women before, during, and after childbirth. The IMPROVE initiative has led to the creation of the

Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence - a national network focused on maternal morbidity and mortality. The WFRC submitted a statement of support for the bill and urged Congress to pass this important legislation.

### **Endometriosis CARE Act**

Representatives Nikema Williams (D-GA) and Lauren Underwood (D-IL) re-introduced the Endometriosis CARE Act, which would advance research on endometriosis and improve the public knowledge about endometriosis to improve the lives of women. The WFRC submitted a statement of support for this bill as well.

### **Agency Activities**

#### New National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Director

Dr. Kyle Walsh, a neuro-epidemiologist with expertise in cancer causation research, was [named](#) as the new NIEHS on October 10. Before coming to NIEHS, he was at the Duke Cancer Institute conducting research on the interplay of genetic and modifiable risk factors that affect brain health, cancer outcomes, and aging. Dr. Walsh will also direct the National Toxicology Program, which is headquartered administratively at NIEHS. WFRC has requested a meeting with Dr. Walsh to discuss women's health research priorities in early 2026.

#### NIH Announces Implementation of a Unified NIH Funding Strategy

On November 21, NIH [announced](#) a unified funding strategy that will help guide clearer and consistent award decisions across all Institutes, Centers, and Offices at NIH. The new funding policy will take effect starting January 2026 Council round and is based on six core tenets to ensure NIH mission and health priorities are being achieved. While peer review will remain essential and vital to award decision-making, NIH will no longer rely on paylines when developing pay plans.

#### NIH on Reviewing Grants for Priority Alignment

On December 12, NIH sent new internal guidance to the staff on how to move further on its \$39 billion grant portfolio to better align with the administration's priorities. The document, "Reviewing Grants for Priority Alignment", details how to determine if grants follow the priorities of the administration and how to terminate them if they do not.

### **Agency Outreach**

#### Outreach to ORWH Director

WFRC had scheduled a meeting with ORWH Director Dr. Janine Clayton to discuss priorities for women's health research on Friday, October 3, but due to the government shutdown, the meeting was postponed and will now be held on January 21.

#### Letter to NIH Director

On December 12, WFRC wrote a letter to Dr. Bhattacharya, urging him to consider qualified candidates with OB/GYN specialty and expertise in women's health research for open leadership positions at NIH, particularly for the leadership positions at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

#### Outreach to NIEHS Director

WFRC reached out to Dr. Kyle Walsh's office and requested a meeting with him to discuss women's health research priorities and potential collaboration opportunities between NIEHS and WFRC.

**Funding Opportunities from NIH I/Cs**

**Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health (BIRCWH) (K12 Clinical Trial Optional) ([RFA-OD-24-013](#))**

Expiration date: May 29, 2026

**Leveraging Network Infrastructure to Conduct Innovative Research for Women, Children, Pregnant and Lactating Women, and Persons with Disabilities ([UG3/UH3 - Clinical Trial Optional](#))**

Expiration date: November 16, 2027

**Mood and Psychosis Symptoms during the Menopause Transition ([R01 Clinical Trial Optional](#), [R21 Clinical Trial Optional](#))**

Expiration date: May 8, 2026

**Translational Research in Maternal and Pediatric Pharmacology and Therapeutics ([R01 Clinical Trial Optional](#), [R21 Clinical Trial Optional](#))**

Expiration date: May 8, 2026

**Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Advancing Research on Early Pregnancy Loss ([NOT-HD-22-026](#))**

Expiration date: January 1, 2028