

Research Triangle Park, N.C. - *Congressman David Price (D-NC) delivered the following congratulatory remarks at the installation of Linda Birnbaum as Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). NIEHS, one of the 27 institutes and centers that comprise the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is located in Research Triangle Park.*

It's a pleasure to be here and to follow Linda's remarks. She has reminded us of the important work ahead and has demonstrated once again the commitment and vision that have brought her to this leadership role.

I also want to bring greetings and convey best wishes from my colleagues in representing the Triangle, Bob Etheridge and Brad Miller. We welcome Acting NIH Director Raymond Kington to North Carolina. And it is good to be on the program with George Lucier, who has distinguished himself as director of the National Toxicology Program and as a leader in the local community as well.

I want to recognize my wife Lisa, who especially wanted to join us today because of our association with Linda and David as neighbors and parents of sons about the same age during our early years in Chapel Hill.

Being here at this time of transition also reminds me of my early years of congressional service, when I got a crash course in the good works of NIEHS from the venerable Director David Rall and quickly understood my assignment in Washington: to make sure the final increments of funding for NIEHS's multi-year construction project came through without a hitch! Fortunately, that didn't prove very difficult, for NIEHS had developed a sterling reputation, and the project had support in all the right places.

Now pronouncing the acronym NIEHS has not gotten any easier, but the agency and its mission have seen their reach extended and their profile raised as our awareness of what causes illness, and of the connection of environment to health, has expanded. The National Toxicology Program has had a similar evolution. I am particularly glad to hear the new Director stress the importance of interpretation and outreach to the broader public; she has always been good at that. NIEHS has a powerful story to tell, but it does not tell itself. All of us who are stewards of taxpayer dollars have an obligation to give an account of what we are doing and how it affects the community around us.

I associate Ken Olden, the director who followed Dr. Rall, with another kind of endeavor: the effort, year after year, to do right by the NIH budget and -- equally important -- the NIEHS budget within NIH! Fortunately, there is some good news on that score: the combination of the Fiscal 2009 omnibus appropriations bill, just shaken loose in the Senate last week, and the funding for ready-to-go projects in the Recovery Bill will take NIEHS funding well beyond last year's level. And we hope to continue this progress in the 2010 appropriations, on which we're just getting started.

We all know that funding is critically important, but today's ceremony reminds us that even more important is human capital, the quality of the people who embody the mission of this agency and who do its life-saving and life-enhancing work. Linda has exemplified this throughout her career, both at NIEHS and at EPA, continuing active research even as she took on more administrative and leadership responsibilities. But all of you who comprise the NIEHS community are due the gratitude of the wider community, for the scientific advances to which you contribute and the skill and dedication you demonstrate every day on behalf of the common good. You will now have a new and inspiring leader, and we eagerly anticipate the paths you will break together in the years ahead.

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