

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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January 19, 2006

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to encourage you and your staff to attend an important Congressional briefing entitled "How Science Works and How Can Science Most Effectively Inform Policy?" organized by the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. You should already have received an invitation for this event from the Center. The briefing will take place on Monday, January 23, 2006, from 1:00-3:00PM in Room HC-8 of the Capitol.

Congress must make numerous critical decisions that need to be informed by science. These range from deciding the best way to prevent an outbreak of avian flu to developing the most effective energy policies. This briefing, featuring two of the nation's most respected scientific voices, is designed to provide an overview of the scientific method, that is how scientists go about trying to understand the world, and of how they can best help us in our work. The briefing is not focused on any specific policy question or position, but rather on how science can and should be used by political decision-makers.

The first portion of the briefing, which will be led by Dr. Donald Kennedy, Editor-in-Chief of *Science*, our country's leading science journal, will cover such topics as: What is a scientific theory and how are such theories tested? What constitutes a scientific proof? Is there such a thing as scientific fact? What is the role of probability in science and how do scientists deal with uncertainty? How does science tackle so called "non-linear" changes like global climate change or the loss of some species worldwide, when these changes are unprecedented, enormously complex, and on a global scale?

The second part of the briefing will be led by Dr. Harvey V. Fineberg, President of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. (The National Academies comprise the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, and the National Research Council.) He will look at the role of scientists in general, and the Academy and other non-governmental scientific bodies in particular, in advising policy-makers, and how these advisory relationships might work most effectively.

The program will include:

Welcome and Introductions—Eric Chivian M.D., Director, Center for Health and the Global Environment, Harvard Medical School; Co-Founder, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Winner of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize

How Science Works—Donald Kennedy Ph.D., Editor-in-Chief, *Science*; former President, Stanford University; former Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration

How Can Science Most Effectively Inform Policy—Harvey V. Fineberg M.D., Ph.D., President of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; former Provost of Harvard University; former Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health

Discussion to Follow

This briefing is free and open to the public; no reservations are required. For further information, please contact Margaret Thomsen at the Center for Health and the Global Environment (617-384-8533 or margaret_thomsen@hms.harvard.edu), or David Mayorga at the Committee on Science (202-225-0584 or david.mayorga@mail.house.gov).


SHERWOOD BOEHLERT
Chairman

Sincerely,


BART GORDON
Ranking Member