

# Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR)

On February 14, 2013 Senators Cornyn (R-TX) and Wyden (D-OR) and Representatives Doyle (D-PA), Yoder (R-KS), and Lofgren (D-CA) introduced the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research (FASTR) Act, a bill that will accelerate scientific discovery and fuel innovation by making articles reporting on publicly funded scientific research freely accessible online for anyone to read and build upon.

FASTR will accelerate science, fuel innovation, and improve the lives and welfare of Americans and those around the world. This is an achievable goal – **today**. Now is the time to push for this groundbreaking legislation, and let Congress know that the public deserves access to the research that they paid for.

Because of its scope - the bill touches 11 major Federal U.S. Agencies - FASTR has been referred to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, and the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The bill is under active consideration, and additional co-sponsors are being sought. To date has not been scheduled for a mark-up or Committee hearing. FASTR remains an important marker in Congress; portions of the language from the legislation were included in the recent FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Act, requiring Agencies under the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to ensure that articles resulting from their funded research be made available to the public no later than 12 months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The legislation has also recently served a model for proposed State-level bills, most notably in New York and California.

## Background

Every year, the federal government funds over sixty billion dollars in basic and applied research. Most of this funding is concentrated within 11 departments/agencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), and Department of Energy). This research results in a significant number of articles being published each year – approximately 90,000 papers are published annually as result of NIH funding alone.

Because U.S. taxpayers underwrite this research, they have a right to expect that its *dissemination* and *use* will be maximized, and that they will have access to articles reporting on the results. The Internet has revolutionized information sharing and has made it possible to make the latest advances freely available to every researcher, student, teacher, entrepreneur, business owner and citizen so that the results can be read and built upon as efficiently as possible.

Now before both the House of Representatives and the Senate, FASTR would require those agencies with annual extramural research budgets of \$100 million or more to provide the public with online access to research manuscripts stemming from such funding no later than six months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The bill gives individual agencies flexibility in choosing the location of the digital repository to house this content, as long as the

repositories meet conditions for public accessibility and productive reuse of digital articles, and have provisions for interoperability and long-term archiving.

The bill specifically covers unclassified research funded by agencies including: Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Transportation, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the National Science Foundation.

FASTR reflects the growing trend among funding agencies – and college and university campuses – to leverage their investment in the conduct of research by maximizing the dissemination of results. It follows the successful path forged by the NIH's Public Access Policy, as well as the growing trend in adoption of similar policies by international funders such as the Research Councils United Kingdom (RCUK), private funders such as the Wellcome Trust, dozens of U.S. Institutions, such as Harvard, MIT, and the University of Kansas.

FASTR will make these articles freely available for all potential users to read and ensure that articles can be fully used in the digital environment, enabling the use of new computational analysis tools that promise to revolutionize the research process.

## **Talking Points**

- In the age of the Internet, we need smarter policies that take full advantage of the digital environment to strengthen our capacity to advance scientific discovery, promote innovation, generate jobs, and promote economic growth.
- This bill represents an important stride towards creating conditions that leverage the digital environment, by ensuring that the information contained in articles reporting on taxpayer funded scientific research can be freely accessed and fully reused in the digital environment.
- Access to the information contained in these articles is an essential component of our nation's investment in science, and should be widely shared with the public. Yet most taxpayers – including scientists – cannot readily gain access to all the research paid for with their taxes
- Public access to research is important because it ensures that taxpayers receive the full return on their investment in publicly funded research. By removing barriers in the sharing and use of research, we can speed the pace of scientific discovery, and encourage new, interdisciplinary approaches to research challenges.
- Expanded sharing and reuse of results will lead to increased use and application of research, and accelerate the translation of this knowledge into applications - products and services which will benefit the public, spur innovation, and fuel long-term economic growth.
- Ensuring that these articles are available in formats and under terms so that they can be fully used in the digital environment enables the use of new computational analysis tools that promise to revolutionize the research process.
- This bill provides an important mechanism to ensure that manuscripts of peer-reviewed scientific articles resulting from research funded by the U.S. Government can be accessed and used by American taxpayers via the Internet.
- This bill reflects the growing trend – by funding agencies and higher education

institutions worldwide – to maximize access to and expanded sharing of research results, increasing usage by millions of scientists, professionals, and individuals, and delivering an accelerated return on their investment in research.

- The bill balances the needs of all stakeholders in the scientific research community, and helps to create a level playing field where the results of publicly-funded research can be accessed equally by all interested citizens.
- Recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is not practical, this bill offers a thoughtful, flexible approach to meeting the crucial policy goal of expanding access to the published results of taxpayer-funded research. Agencies will have flexibility in determining the ultimate location of their online archive, and a sliding scale embargo period provides important protection for journal publishers.
- [Please detail any efforts on your campus, and why public access to research is important to you and your organization.]
- This legislation advances the progress made by the NIH Public Access Policy, the first U.S. agency to require public access to taxpayer-funded research. Since its implementation, the NIH policy has ensured that more than 90,000 new biomedical manuscripts are deposited each year, resulting in millions of Americans having access to vital health care information. Demand for this information is extremely high, with more than 700,000 unique users accessing material from this repository each weekday.
- Research results besides those covered by the NIH public access policy on issues of equal importance from areas ranging from renewable energy to sustainable agriculture to education should be made just as readily accessible to the public.
- Opponents say that the public doesn't want or need access to scholarly research. However, as citizens whose tax dollars underwrite this research, we have a right to expect that crucial details of the most recent scientific advancements in all areas are made available to us. As teachers, students, researchers, librarians, entrepreneurs, small business owners, health care workers, and other active public citizens, access to up-to-date information ensures that we can contribute as effectively as possible to our local knowledge economies, and to our national innovation and competitiveness efforts.
- Please support and/or co-sponsor the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR) today.

See more at: <http://www.sparc.arl.org/advocacy/national/fastr#sthash.cqt5B3tD.dpuf>