MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING

ASK: Please continue the nation’s commitment to cures and support at least a $2.5 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY 2020 (total funding, $41.6 billion).

FACT: Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death for Americans, yet only 5% of NIH’s budget supports heart disease research, and only 1% supports stroke research.

FACT: New alarming data show that nearly half (48%) of U.S. adults have some form of cardiovascular disease and more than 93 million adults and nearly 14 million children in the United States are now considered obese, a root cause of cardiovascular disease.

FACT: At a cost of nearly $1 billion a day, cardiovascular disease is the nation’s most expensive disease, with costs projected to exceed $1 trillion a year by 2035.

FACT: Robust NIH–funded research remains our country’s best hope to discover innovative ways to prevent, diagnose, treat and ultimately develop cures for heart disease and stroke. Increased NIH funding will lead to a better understanding of cardiovascular disease and pave the path to longer, healthier lives worldwide.

SURPRISE MEDICAL BILLING/BALANCED BILLING

ASK: Please support legislation that would protect patients from financially crippling surprise medical bills.

FACT: A surprise medical bill can arise when a patient unknowingly receives care from an out-of-network provider in an in-network facility, or in emergency situations when the patient has no ability to select the care facility, care team, or medical transport company. In these circumstances, providers may “balance the bill” by billing the patient directly for the cost of the care not covered by their insurance.

FACT: Nearly 60% of insured Americans have received a surprise medical bill for care they thought was covered by their insurance. Cardiovascular patients are particularly susceptible to these bills because of the unexpected and urgent nature of the event and the care. For example, more than 800,000 cardiovascular events occur each year outside of hospital settings.

FACT: Cardiovascular patients rely on emergency transportation, including air ambulances, to ensure they receive the care they need as fast as possible. Patients are routinely billed as much as $30,000 per air ambulance ride. Patients cannot afford this, especially when they don’t have a choice over how they are transported in emergency situations.

FACT: Emergency transportation services are critical for patients as they help reduce the time between the medical event and treatment. Policymakers should craft solutions that protect patients from surprise balance bills in all healthcare settings, including emergency transportation settings.
TOBACCO FLAVORS

**ASK:** Please support legislation to ban the sale of flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, cigars and menthol cigarettes.

**FACT:** The Tobacco Control Act of 2009 banned flavors, except menthol, in cigarettes but not in e-cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products. Today, there are more than 15,000 different flavors of e-cigarettes alone, including a variety of youth-friendly flavors such as mango, mint and cotton candy.

**FACT:** Flavors, including menthol, make tobacco products less harsh and more appealing to youth and other inexperienced tobacco users. 81% of youth who have ever used a tobacco product started with a flavored product, and most say they use these products “because they come in flavors I like.”

**FACT:** Youth tobacco use has skyrocketed in recent years and continues to rise; from 2017 to 2018 there was a nearly 80% increase in high school students and nearly 50% increase in middle school students who use e-cigarettes. Today, 5 million American kids use e-cigarettes, more than one-quarter of all high school students. Most use fruit, candy, mint or menthol flavors.

**FACT:** It’s time to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic. Flavored tobacco products are designed to appeal to youth, putting a new generation at risk of a dangerous addiction. To protect our kids, Congress must move quickly and ban flavored products.