

# The American Center for CURES

Senator Joseph Lieberman & Senator Thad Cochran

## Summary of the Bill

The American Center for Cures (ACC) will establish an infrastructure within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to organize and to fund translational research to facilitate the rapid development of diagnostics and therapies resulting from basic science and engineering innovations. The ACC addresses major issues facing publicly funded researchers:

- **The size and conservative nature of research institutions often impede innovation and focus.** In 2003, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) released a report, “Enhancing the Vitality of the National Institutes of Health”, which made a series of recommendations to promote NIH’s capacity to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century health challenges. Recommendations included creating a new leadership position, promoting strategic risk taking in research, encouraging cross- and multi-disciplinary collaboration in research, and providing more oversight and support.
- **Disease research and translation requires better coordination.** Today, no fewer than six federal agencies fund basic and clinical health research without a reliable mechanism for information sharing. Ninety percent of NIH grants are distributed to outside researchers without a reliable mechanism for information sharing. Within the NIH, institutes and centers operate autonomously. In the private market, experts focus on the next blockbuster drug. The end result is redundancy in research, lost opportunities to collaborate, and lack of prioritization towards near-breakthrough therapies which could mean diagnostics and therapeutics against diseases.
- **There are insufficient incentives to develop treatments of less market value but of critical importance to the public’s health.** The NIH performs and funds basic science research, which is critical to the development of novel diagnostics and therapies, but which must be handed off to translational researchers in the private sector for a product to be made. The private market is often reticent to develop essential therapies such as vaccines and antibiotics because of enormous research costs and relatively minimal profit.

*The American Center for Cures addresses the six major findings of the NAS report on enhancing the NIH’s vitality.* It addresses the need for a coordinated approach to funding translational research to achieve scientific breakthroughs and address significant disease burden. With input from public and private partners, the ACC will focus on identifying diseases with significant burden and research promise. The ACC will direct organizational, relational, and financial resources to these diseases, encouraging innovation through cross- and multi-disciplinary collaboration. The ACC will streamline the clinical research endeavor to assess the safety and efficacy of new products more quickly. Small cutting edge biomedical, bioengineering, and other firms will be supported more systematically to move them through the R&D Valley of Death. The Center will foster the nation’s electronic information sharing infrastructure to further support collaborative research across disciplines.