

Role of Entomology in the Issues Before Congress

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I welcome this opportunity to share some brief thoughts with you about some of the current issues before Congress and the role of entomologists in dealing with these issues. I want to begin by noting that one of the faculty from the University of California–Riverside campus in my congressional district, Toshio Murashige, was the distinguished recipient of last year’s Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Prize, for his work in entomology. He and his colleagues at Riverside do some outstanding research.

As you can probably guess, entomology is not particularly a high priority for most of my colleagues in Congress. However, you can be assured these same congressional colleagues have heard from their constituents on issues such as food safety, water quality, climate change, global warming, tropical deforestation, and conservation of species and natural areas. Thus, one of the challenges facing entomologists is to demonstrate the relevance of their scientific activities to relevant federal policymakers, including Congress.

I think this point can be illustrated with reference to the current food safety and pesticide debate. On the one hand we have consumers desiring food with no pesticide residues, and on the other hand we have agricultural companies arguing loudly that there are no alternatives to pesticides. Without question, entomologists have been at the forefront of biological pest control research, but these activities need to be communicated to the public. Research on biocontrol absolutely must be increased if we are to have a sufficient number of