IN THIS ISSUE

- House Approves Military Construction/Veterans Spending Bill
- Debate, Questions Over Sequestration Continue
- National Weather Service Budget Under Congressional Scrutiny
- Energy and Commerce Committee Reports Out Two New Fuel Bills
- Bingaman Introduces Helium Stewardship Act
- Administration Launches Advanced Manufacturing Competition
- Graduate Enrollment and Postdoctoral Appointments Growth Trend Continues
- NIH Seeks Comments on CareerTrac
- DOE Announces Fifth Energy Innovation Hub Funding, Releases Draft Guidebook
- NRO Donates Telescopes to NASA
- North Carolina Lawmakers Could Restrict Calculations of Sea Level Rise
- Scientists Face Attacks By Eco-Anarchists
- Report Compares Immigration Policies of Nations
- People in the News
- Policy Alert Archives

BUDGET NEWS

House Approves Military Construction/Veterans Spending Bill. Last week, the House approved its FY 2013 Military Construction/Veterans appropriations bill (H.R. 5854) on a 407-12 vote. The bill meets the President's request to hold Department of Veterans Affairs R&D flat from FY 2012, at $1.2 billion in direct funding. None of the floor amendments changed the topline R&D figures originally estimated from the Appropriations Committee bill, though one amendment (H. Amdt. 1158), introduced by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and approved via voice vote, ensures that the VA dedicates at least $35 million to post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. R&D in the House bill also matches the Senate's version, which was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 22 and awaits action on the Senate floor. The Administration has reiterated its threat to veto any appropriations bills that do not abide by the FY 2013 spending levels reached in last fall's debt ceiling agreement; the House budget has set spending levels $19 billion lower.

The full House is expected to act on the FY 2013 Energy and Water and the FY 2013 Homeland Security spending bills this week. Additionally, the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee is expected to mark up its FY 2013 Agriculture spending bill Wednesday.
Debate, Questions Over Sequestration Continue. The White House went on record last week by stating that funding for the war in Afghanistan will in fact be affected by the sequestration cuts, scheduled to take effect in January 2013. While there was no specific exemption for war funding, many -- including the Pentagon -- had believed that the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account, which funds the war, would be exempt. However, the Office of Management and Budget now says there is no specific language in the Budget Control Act to exempt the OCO spending.

Republicans are also demanding greater clarity on other sequestration cuts. Republicans in the House and the Senate have introduced legislation called the Sequestration Transparency Act (S. 3228 and H.R. 5872), which would require the Administration to provide a detailed plan for sequestration cuts. The Administration has not reported any contingency plans for the sequestration.

For updates on the federal research and development budget for FY 2013, please visit the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy website.

OTHER CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

National Weather Service Budget Under Congressional Scrutiny. Jack Hayes, director of the National Weather Service (NWS), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), stepped down from his position after revelations that the Chief Financial Officer had transferred portions of its program budget to over 100 local weather offices without gaining Congressional authority, which is required by law. Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME), ranking member on the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard in the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, urged that the Senate postpone consideration of the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill, which includes NOAA's budget.

Energy and Commerce Committee Reports Out Two New Fuel Bills. The House Energy and Commerce Committee passed two energy bills on May 17: The Strategic Energy Production Act (H.R. 4480), sponsored by Rep. Cory Gardner (R-CO), aims to increase oil and gas production by requiring the federal government to lease out federal lands and offshore areas for drilling if they tap the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The Gasoline Regulations Act (H.R. 4471), sponsored by Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-KY), would create a new task force to study the economic effects of several of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) regulations, including regulations established by the Clean Air Act. It would also require the EPA to consider economic costs as well as environmental well-being and citizens’ health when determining environmental regulations.

Bingaman Introduces Helium Stewardship Act. In late April Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) introduced the Helium Stewardship Act (S. 2374), which aims to help conserve the U.S. Federal Helium Reserve. The government was directed to sell the reserve by the Helium Privatization Act in 1996, and Bingaman's bill seeks to authorize "prudent helium sales and management beyond 2015" and would set aside a 15-year supply of helium for scientific research purposes.
**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**Administration Launches Advanced Manufacturing Competition.** On May 29, the White House announced it would launch a $26 million interagency initiative to promote public-private partnerships in advanced manufacturing. The Advanced Manufacturing Jobs and Innovation Accelerator Challenge is accepting proposals for concepts that will "help grow a region's industry clusters" through advanced manufacturing research that can also accelerate technology commercialization. The deadline for applications is July 9. All proposals will be reviewed by six funding agencies: the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, the Department of Energy, the Department of Labor, the National Science Foundation, and the Small Business Administration.

**Graduate Enrollment and Postdoctoral Appointments Growth Trend Continues.** The National Science Foundation has released a report, based on the Survey of Graduate Students and Postdocs in Science and Engineering, indicating that the number of graduate students enrolled in science, engineering, and health fields increased 30 percent between 2000 and 2010. The number of postdocs reported in 2010 represented an 8 percent increase over 2009 and an approximately 45 percent increase over 2000. The growth of postdocs in engineering (approximately 110 percent) outpaced that of postdocs in science (approximately 40 percent) over the last decade.

**NIH Seeks Comments on CareerTrac.** The Fogarty International Center, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, National Institute of General Medical Sciences and National Cancer Institute are seeking comments about CareerTrac, a web-based application that allows principal investigators, on a volunteer basis, to record the career achievement progress of trainees. Comments are invited on one or more of the following points: (1) whether the information has practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the estimated burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information. Comments are welcome through August 1.

**DOE Announces Fifth Energy Innovation Hub Funding, Releases Draft Guidebook.** The Department of Energy has released a Funding Opportunity Announcement for its fifth Energy Innovation Hub. The theme for this hub is critical materials used in energy technologies. The purpose is to establish a multidisciplinary and sustained effort to identify problems and develop short-, medium- and long-term solutions across the entire lifecycle of these materials. The hub is anticipated to be funded up to $120 million over five years. In other DOE news, the department has issued a draft of "Federal Renewable Energy Guide: Developing Large-Scale Renewable Energy Projects at Federal Facilities Using Private Capital." The guidebook, as the name implies, intends to provide guidance to federal agencies on how to establish a project development framework to allow federal agencies to work effectively with private developers on the implementation of large-scale renewable energy projects. The draft is open to public comment until July 2.

**NRO Donates Telescopes to NASA.** The National Reconnaissance Office has given NASA two space-qualified telescopes as big as Hubble, but with enhanced features. While there are currently no identified funds available to outfit and launch these new assets, NASA and its advisory committees are considering how the telescopes could potentially be outfitted with appropriate instruments to address the top scientific goals for the nation in astronomy and astrophysics, as articulated by the latest "Decadal Survey" of
the National Research Council. These goals include the study of dark energy, galaxy evolution, and extrasolar planets.

**ELSEWHERE**

**North Carolina Lawmakers Could Restrict Calculations of Sea Level Rise.** A proposed piece of legislation in North Carolina’s state legislature would change the way state scientists are allowed to estimate sea-level rise over the next century. Specifically, the legislation would require state agencies to only use historical sea level data from the year 1900, and to extrapolate future trends linearly. The legislation is supported by a local economic development organization called NC-20 that seeks to promote continued development in the coastal Carolina region. Previously, a state-appointed science panel had estimated (PDF) a likely sea level rise of one meter or 39 inches in North Carolina by 2100, but these findings were removed from planning documents by the state Coastal Resource Commission due to political pressure from business groups and local governments. The NC Division of Emergency Management has acknowledged that this outside pressure has led to “key alterations” in a forthcoming sea level report. NC-20 has argued that the state should plan for a sea-level rise of only 8 inches by 2100, a much smaller level than that expected by many climate scientists - and by coastal planners in other states.

*Comment on the above item.* Policy Alert blog entries are located on AAAS’s MemberCentral. Once you are logged in, click on "Blogs" and look for "Capitol Connection" in the drop-down list.

**Scientists Face Attacks By Eco-Anarchists.** Law enforcement officials are encountering increasing numbers of violent attacks against scientists and their employers by groups who believe that science and technology are responsible for much of the world’s suffering. The attacks include a non-fatal shooting of a nuclear engineer in Italy, an attempted bombing at a nanotechnology laboratory in Switzerland, and multiple bomb attacks against nanotechnology facilities in Mexico. In one of the latter attacks, this one at the Monterrey Institute of Technology, two researchers were hospitalized with serious injuries. There appears to be some international coordination among the groups responsible for these attacks, but none has been reported operating in the United States.

**Report Compares Immigration Policies of Nations.** Last month the Partnership for a New American Economy -- a group of mayors and industry leaders -- and the Partnership for New York City released a comparative study of the immigration policies of nine countries against those of the United States: Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. The study found that many of these nations have designed fast-track permanent visas for immigrants with advanced degrees in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) field and have created a new visa to attract entrepreneurs, among other policies. The report recommends that the U.S. reform its immigration policies in order to attract and retain highly educated workers and entrepreneurs, especially those in STEM fields.

**People in the News.** Carl Wieman, the associate director for science at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), will reportedly leave his post this week for personal reasons. Admiral David Titley, oceanographer for the Navy and director of the Navy’s Task Force on Climate Change, will move to NOAA in July to serve as the
Deputy Undersecretary of Operations.

Archived issues of *AAAS Policy Alert* can be found at [http://www.aaas.org/spp/policyalert](http://www.aaas.org/spp/policyalert).

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