Congressional Leaders Agree to Fund Government Through March 2013. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) announced last week that they reached an agreement on a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government through March 2013, avoiding a shutdown prior to the election. Such an agreement became necessary after Reid and an aide working for House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) said neither chamber was likely to act on further spending bills before the election. The White House praised the initial agreement in a statement.

The agreement appears to temporarily settle a running dispute between the parties over total FY 2013 spending. Last year’s debt ceiling agreement established a discretionary spending cap of $1.047 trillion. While the Administration and Senate Democrats have abided by this agreed-upon limit, the House GOP passed a budget resolution that capped overall spending at $1.028 trillion. The lower cap has drawn the ire of Democrats, and the White House has promised to veto any spending bill under the lower cap. The agreement will reportedly follow the higher spending level, which adds an additional $4 billion in discretionary spending above FY 2012 levels, a less than one percent increase overall. The resolution itself will be drafted, released, and voted on after the August congressional recess.

How Congress will allocate this increase remains to be seen, but in general the impacts on R&D spending will likely be uneven depending on the agency, since it merely extends
FY 2012 funding levels. Some R&D agencies, like NIH, were already slated for a flat budget in FY 2013 by Congress and the Administration, and so the continuing resolution would have little effect on their funding. Some agencies or programs slated for moderate or large increases – like the National Science Foundation and the Department of Homeland Security – will lose out on those increases for the time being, whereas programs apparently headed for cuts – like NASA’s Planetary Science program or R&D at EPA – may avoid these reductions for now. Programs targeted for zeroing-out – such as NSF’s political science research and climate change education programs or NIH’s economics research, all targeted by the House – also should get a temporary reprieve. The plan is for the resolution to be free of policy riders. What the continuing resolution will likely not do, however, is resolve the sequestration, although separate bipartisan negotiations continue.

Administration Takes Action on Sequestration. The Obama Administration took several steps to prepare to implement sequestration cuts in January, should those occur. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Acting Director Jeffrey Zients testified before the House Armed Services Committee that military personnel would be exempt from sequestration cuts. OMB also released a guidance memo instructing agencies to continue spending at appropriated levels, and laid out that agencies can expect conversations with OMB to begin planning for the cuts. However, the memo failed to provide specifics of how the cuts will be implemented, instead urging Congress to pass a deficit reduction deal to replace the sequester. Meanwhile, there are political controversies over whether the Working Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act, requiring defense contractors to give 60-day notification to employees if layoffs are likely, should apply in the case of sequestration.

Senate Appropriations Committee Passes Defense Spending Bill. Last week the Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the FY 2013 Defense Appropriations bill, after the full House passed its own version two weeks ago. According to AAAS estimates (PDF), the bill would reduce DOD R&D by $1.9 billion or 2.5% below FY 2012 levels, nearly equal to the overall cut proposed by the Administration. By contrast, the House version would reduce overall DOD R&D by about half as much. Basic research across all military departments and agencies would be funded at $2.1 billion under the Senate bill, roughly the same as the House and the Administration proposals. Applied research funding in the Senate bill is more generous than either the Administration or the House proposals. As in prior years (and mirroring the House), the Senate Committee has restored substantial funding to the Defense Health Research program, which the Administration had targeted for a nearly 46.9% cut. Further details are available at the AAAS R&D Budget and Policy website.

The bill is unlikely to reach the Senate floor anytime soon, given the recent agreement by Congressional leaders to adopt a continuing resolution funding the government through the first few months of 2013. The FY 2013 Interior/Environment spending bill is now the lone R&D-heavy spending legislation yet to be taken up by the Senate Committee.

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
**Senate Committee Holds First Climate Change Hearing Since 2009.** On Aug. 1 the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works held a hearing titled “Update on the Latest Climate Change Science and Local Adaptation Measures.” The first panel included three climate scientists, including former AAAS President James McCarthy, and the second panel was comprised of community leaders who are finding ways to adapt to extreme weather events and sea level rise caused by climate change. While there was no agreement about the gravity of the consequences of climate change, all panelists agreed that the earth is getting warmer. Meanwhile, in a study published in the recent issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS), NASA scientist James Hansen makes a scientific link between recent extreme heat and drought events (seen in the U.S., Europe, and Russia) and climate change. Hansen also authored an op-ed in *The Washington Post* on his findings.

**House Science Committee Examines Research University-Business Partnerships.** On Aug. 1 the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee held a hearing on the National Research Council report on *Research Universities and the Future of America*, focusing on the report’s recommendation to strengthen partnerships between research universities and business. In his opening statement, Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL), chair of the Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, highlighted the need for research universities to fill the gap left by large corporate laboratories of the 20th century. The witnesses, largely from industry, emphasized the importance of university-industry collaboration in recruiting and retaining science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) talent.

**Sen. Bingaman Releases Nuclear Waste Management Bill.** On Aug. 1 Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) unveiled a bill on nuclear waste management. The Nuclear Waste Administration Act of 2012 (*S. 3469*), which follows recommendations set forth by a Blue Ribbon Commission report, would establish an independent organization to manage nuclear waste and would provide a consent-based approach for choosing the sites of nuclear waste facilities. Although Sen. Bingaman does not expect the bill to pass this Congress, he plans to hold a hearing on the issue in September.

**Bipartisan Legislation Supports DOE High-Performance Computing.** Sen. Bingaman, along with Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Dick Durbin (D-IL), introduced legislation to support the Department of Energy’s high-performance computing exascale initiative, which aims to develop computers 1,000 times more powerful than current supercomputers. The DOE High-End Computing Improvement Act of 2012 (*S. 3459*) would authorize funds for the initiative through FY 2015 (press release found here).

**EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**NIH Creates New Office, Research Program.** NIH has created a new Office of Emergency Care Research to be housed in the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. The office will coordinate efforts among NIH institutes and centers to conduct research on emergency medicine. NIH has also announced a new grant program, Opportunities for Collaborative Research at the NIH Clinical Center, to support partnerships between extramural and intramural researchers and to allow extramural researchers access to the Clinical Center. The program stems from a recommendation...
NRC Report on Disaster Resilience. A just-published National Research Council report, "Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative," considers ways to make the U.S. more disaster-resilient by 2030. Among the recommendations: building an open database for earthquake, flood, and other natural disaster data that would catalog injuries, loss of life, property loss, and impacts on economic activity. The report also advocates that the Department of Homeland Security - in collaboration with other federal agencies, state and local partners, and professional groups - establish a national scorecard for resilience, where resilience is defined as "the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events." The committee plans to discuss its findings at a meeting in the fall in Washington, DC.

North Carolina Passes Modified Sea-Level Rise Bill. A bill to limit the use of sea-level rise estimates in coastal planning decisions has become law in North Carolina. A state science advisory panel had previously estimated that sea level could rise by as much as three feet or more by 2016, but state agencies will now not be allowed to use these findings until 2016. Instead, the state’s coastal resources commission must develop an updated study in the next three years. The law does not go as far as an earlier version of the bill, reported in the June 6 Policy Alert. That version would have mandated that state agencies only use linear extrapolation based on historical data to estimate future sea level rise, a method that would largely ignore future climate impacts. The bill was the subject of a recent op-ed in the Raleigh, NC News and Observer by AAAS CEO Alan Leshner and William L. Chameides, Dean of Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment. Under the law, local governments can still develop their own sea level rise estimates for use in local planning decisions.

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.

People in the News. Cass Sunstein, administrator of OMB’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), is leaving his position to return to Harvard University, according to news reports.

Archived issues of AAAS Policy Alert can be found at http://www.aaas.org/spp/policyalert.
welcome. Please write to alert@aaas.org.