Friday, April 6, 2007

CONTENTS
CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW
BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS
Eighty-Six House Members Write to Appropriators on NSF Funding
Sixty-Four Senators Endorse President’s FY08 Request for DOE Office of Science  UPDATED
OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS
Senate to Consider Stem Cell Legislation Next Week  UPDATED
OTHER
AAU and NASULGC Thank Senators for Increase in S&T Budget Function

CONGRESSIONAL SCHEDULE  NEW

Both the House and Senate were out of session this week for the spring recess. The Senate will return on Tuesday, April 10, and the House on Monday, April 16.

When the Senate returns next week, it will begin consideration of stem-cell research legislation (see item below) and a bill to allow the government to negotiate lower prescription drug prices under Medicare. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) said last week that the chamber also may take up an intelligence authorization bill and may debate immigration reform during the last two weeks of May, just before the Memorial Day recess.

House leaders said last week that at some point after the chamber returns April 16, they expect to consider the FY08 Defense authorization bill and a voting rights bill for the District of Columbia.

Some time this month, both chambers also are likely to consider a conference report on the FY08 budget resolution, but no new information about an agreement is available at this writing.

Regarding the FY07 emergency supplemental funding bill, CongressDaily reports that the chairmen of the House and Senate appropriations committees plan to convene a public conference on the measure the week of April 16, with the hope of completing an agreement by the end of April. President Bush has threatened to veto the measure if it contains a timeline for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS

EIGHTY-SIX HOUSE MEMBERS WRITE TO APPROPRIATORS ON NSF FUNDING
A group of 86 Members of the House sent a letter to House appropriators this week urging them to provide $6.43 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY08, the same as the President’s request. Along with requesting the Administration’s proposed 8.7 percent increase for NSF, the letter asks for at least $200 million above the request for the NSF Education and Human Resources Directorate if additional funds become available.

The letter, which was spearheaded by Reps. Vernon Ehlers (R-MI), Rush Holt (D-NJ), and Bob Inglis (R-SC), is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/Ltr_Mollohan_Frelinghuysen_NSF_4-2-07.pdf.

**SIXTY-FOUR SENATORS ENDORSE PRESIDENT’S FY08 REQUEST FOR DOE OFFICE OF SCIENCE ** *UPDATED*

A group of 64 Senators sent a letter to Senate appropriators on March 29 urging them to provide the President’s full FY08 request for the Department of Energy Office of Science. The letter, spearheaded by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN), requests $4.4 billion for the office.

The letter has been posted on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/Ltr_DOE_OSC_FY08.pdf.

**OTHER CONGRESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

**SENATE TO CONSIDER STEM CELL LEGISLATION NEXT WEEK ** *UPDATED*

When the Senate returns to session next Tuesday, one of the first orders of business will be consideration of stem-cell research legislation. A 20-hour debate is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, April 10, and conclude with votes on Wednesday or Thursday.

Two bills will be considered. The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act (S. 5) is the same bill that passed the House earlier this year (H.R. 3) and passed both the House and Senate last Congress, except that it has been augmented with language that the Senate approved unanimously last year in the form of S. 2754. The House-passed measure would authorize federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research conducted on cell lines derived from embryos developed from in-vitro fertilization that otherwise would be discarded. The added language encourages NIH to pursue other forms of stem cell research. The Coalition for the Advancement of Medical Research (CAMR) fully supports the amended version of S. 5.

The second bill, the Hope Offered through Principled and Ethical Stem Cell Research Act (S. 30), introduced by Senators Norm Coleman (R-MN) and Johnny Isakson (R-GA), would promote the derivation of stem cell lines from sources that do not harm human embryos, such as from umbilical cord blood and adult stem cells. It would not change current policy in any meaningful way, and CAMR is not taking a position on the legislation.

Under a Senate agreement, no amendments may be offered, and each bill will require at least 60 votes to pass.

**OTHER**
AAU AND NASULGC THANK SENATORS FOR INCREASE IN S&T BUDGET FUNCTION

AAU and the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) sent letters to eight Senators April 3 thanking them for cosponsoring an amendment to the Senate FY08 budget resolution that increased the budget assumption for Budget Function 250. Function 250 includes funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

The amendment, accepted on the Senate floor by a vote of 97-1, increased the assumption for the function by about $1 billion above the President’s request. Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN), the lead sponsors of the amendment, said their intention was to add $398 million for NSF, $610 million for the DOE Office of Science, and $11 million for NIST. The Senate budget resolution assumed the President’s FY08 request for NASA.

Along with Senators Bingaman and Alexander, the AAU-NASULGC letter also thanked Senators Pete Domenici (R-NM), John Ensign (R-NV), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Harry Reid (D-NV), and Gordon Smith (R-OR).

The AAU-NASULGC letter is available on the AAU Web site at: http://www.aau.edu/budget/LTR_AAU_NASULGC TY_4-3-07.pdf.

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