

project. With respect to the Continuous Electron Beam Accelerator Facility, the Appropriations Committee provided \$17 million to initiate construction—\$8 million less than the original request. Except for this shortfall, the committee endorsed the entire nuclear physics program as submitted by the Administration—\$216.2 million, an overall increase of \$51.7 million.

Both the magnetic and inertial confinement fusion energy programs received renewed support from the committee. In line with a National Academy of Sciences review of the inertial confinement program, the committee called for DOE to retain a separate budget category for the effort instead of drawing most of its funding from a larger nuclear “weapons activities” program. The committee appropriated a total of \$154 million in funding, \$35.5 million more than DOE had sought. The magnetic fusion program also received a funding boost, \$25 million more than the \$333 million proposed in February. The additional money is to be used to keep mirror concept research alive at DOE and within the universities.

The Appropriations Committee came down hard on DOE’s effort to “privatize” or sell off portions of its uranium enrichment activities. Describing the effort as “counter-productive to maintenance of a stable program,” the committee forbade the department from expending funds to institute, examine, or analyze any proposal for privatizing any facet of DOE enrichment activities. ■ **MARK CRAWFORD**

Florida Physician to Be Assistant Secretary for Health

Robert E. Windom, a Florida physician, is expected to become the next assistant secretary for health at the Department of Health and Human Services. The post has gone unfilled for a year and a half since the resignation of Edward Brandt, who became chancellor of the University of Maryland at Baltimore.

On 18 June the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee approved Windom’s nomination by voice vote, and the appointment is expected to be confirmed easily by the full Senate. As head of the Public Health Service, Windom will have a variety of biomedical research agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, under his purview.

Windom, 55, is an internist from Sarasota and has been an assistant professor at the University of Miami School of Medicine since 1973. According to his disclosure

forms, he was chairman of a regional committee for physicians supporting the Reagan-Bush campaign, and gave \$55,000 to the Republican Senatorial Trust between 1977 to 1986. ■ **MARJORIE SUN**

Drug Export Bill Torpedoed by Amendment

Legislation that would have allowed the export of drugs that have not been approved by the federal government has bitten the dust. Although the Senate passed an export bill in May, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PMA) announced on 12 June that it will not support the measure because of two provisions that were tacked on unexpectedly during floor debate.

As originally passed by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, the bill would have permitted the shipment of unapproved drugs to other Western countries. The drug industry has lobbied hard for the measure for several years, arguing that it will create new jobs for Americans and help the economy. More recently, biotechnology companies have urged its passage. Critics, however, say that unapproved drugs will be diverted to other countries where regulations governing their use are lax.

The legislation ran into problems on the Senate floor when Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) caught the bill’s sponsor, Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), off guard and introduced a measure that would have placed tighter regulations on infant formula manufacturing. Then Senator John Glenn (D-OH) sponsored a provision that would have enlisted American embassies to help monitor labels on drugs shipped overseas. The bill with these amendments passed. One aide said, referring to the infant formula provision, “In an election year, it’s hard to vote against babies.”

The PMA board, which includes representatives of the three main infant formula manufacturers, then voted not to endorse the Senate bill. The decision, in effect, kills negotiations between PMA and the House side because health and environment subcommittee chairman Henry Waxman (D-CA) favors changes in drug export law that are even more unpalatable to industry.

The association and biotechnology companies say they still support the concept of exporting unapproved drugs. The bill could be resurrected in the next session, but legislative aides say that this Congress was probably the industry’s best shot. ■

MARJORIE SUN

Data Problems Halt Work At Two Nuclear Waste Repository Sites

The Department of Energy has issued “stop work” orders to contractors collecting data at potential nuclear waste repository sites in Nevada and Washington. Behind the move is an effort by the department to correct deficiencies in paperwork supporting core drillings, water samples, and other data needed to analyze the suitability of the sites. DOE’s action comes 13 months before the scheduled start of repository site characterization work, which will be subject to stringent Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) quality assurance standards.

Department officials responsible for gathering geologic and hydrologic data at candidate sites at Yucca Mountain, Nevada, and Hanford, Washington, say there are no major deficiencies in their recordkeeping. Nevertheless, DOE officials in Washington admit privately that recent audits at these locations have revealed some problems that could produce legal challenges if left uncorrected. The purpose of the stop-work order, says Don Vieth, director of the Nevada Waste Management Project Office, is to bring DOE quality assurance procedures into line with guidelines published in March by the NRC. DOE’s decision not to select a second site in the East has added to concerns about quality control, officials say.

At this point, Carl Johnson, chief of technical programs for Nevada’s nuclear waste project office, is not alarmed by DOE’s action. “I am not sure there really is much of a problem,” says Johnson, who notes that DOE has yet to explain its action to state officials. Of concern, though, is whether 50,000 linear feet of geologic core samples from Yucca Mountain have adequate support documentation. Johnson also wants to be sure that there are strong procedures at the core library, which primarily serves the Nevada nuclear weapons test site, to assure that core samples do not get mixed up.

Faced with the prospect that the NRC could find fault with the database when the formal licensing process commences around 1991, Hanford officials also are trying to establish a sound paper trail to support core drilling data collected since 1976. Also subject to this quality assurance review are records related to hydrology. Rockwell International, DOE’s contractor, is seeking to correct problems at Hanford by 1 November. Washington state officials, who are concerned about data recordkeeping prior to 1983, are planning to closely examine DOE’s documentation. ■

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