

Science Budgets Get Lift from Senate

The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have emerged from the Senate Appropriations Committee with their fiscal year 1988 budgets virtually intact. Two months ago it appeared that the Senate would have to impose deep cuts on one or both of the agencies. This was avoided, however, after the Senate budget committee provided the appropriations committee with additional spending authority.

In action concluded on 1 October, the first day of the new fiscal year, the appropriations committee voted to give NSF a budget of \$1.866 billion. This is just \$33 million below the Administration's request and \$244 million above 1987 levels. The budget includes \$1.635 billion for research and \$115 million for science education. The Antarctic program is held at its 1987 level of \$117 million, compared to the \$143 million proposed by the House.

The House has appropriated \$73 million less than the Senate committee for NSF, but it cut research funding to \$1.505 billion and boosted science education to \$145 million.

The Senate committee gave NASA \$9.2 billion for 1988—close to the \$9.48 billion approved by the House. The space station would get funded at \$559 million, less than the \$767 million requested by the Administration. The appropriations subcommittee that oversees NASA had recommended eliminating the space station budget altogether. However, Senators Bennett Johnston (D-LA) and Jake Garn (R-UT) prevailed with an amendment to fund space station activities with part of the extra money allocated to the appropriations committee. Legislative conferences to resolve differences in the House and Senate versions of the NSF and NASA bills are expected to commence within 2 weeks.

In separate action, the Senate appropriations committee has allocated \$6.876 billion in 1988 to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). This is \$313 million more than the House provided. No matter what legislators do in conference, NIH's budget will rise appreciably. The 1987 budget totaled \$5.94 billion; the White House had hoped to cut it to \$5.19 billion this year.

The Senate's proposed budget jumped \$82 million after committee members accepted an amendment from Senator Lowell Weicker (R-CT), who initially argued for an increase of \$120 million. The additional funding provides \$20 million for capital improvements at university research facilities to support work on acquired immune

deficiency syndrome (AIDS). It also contains an extra \$62 million for NIH's general competitive research grant program, bringing it to an estimated \$1.196 billion (including AIDS research grants). This is up slightly from the \$1.109 billion appropriated by Congress for 1987. The House has allocated \$1.225 billion for competing research grants, while the Administration wanted to cut the figure to \$907 million.

Despite the largely favorable actions in the Senate and House, budget officers at

NIH, NSF, and NASA are still a bit nervous. Congress has yet to decide how to deal with \$23 billion in unfunded spending in fiscal 1988. Republican members of Congress have indicated they could accept tax increases on the order of \$6 billion—about half of what Democrats want. But, some spending reductions probably will come from spending reductions that could be spread equally across defense and discretionary accounts. The depth of these budget reductions will depend on bookkeeping practices and on how large a tax increase Congress can swallow. ■

MARK CRAWFORD

NIH Finally Resolves 7-Year Dispute

Culminating a complicated and rancorous 7-year dispute between two heart researchers at Cornell University Medical College, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has chastised Jeffrey S. Borer for carelessness in the conduct of two studies published in 1981 and 1983.

The NIH conducted an investigation in response to allegations by Jerome Jacobstein, now at Graduate Hospital in Philadelphia, that his former colleague Borer, who is still at Cornell, had been guilty of various irregularities in research conducted there.

NIH found that two studies conducted by Borer suffered from "lack of attention to study requirements and generally accepted standards of record-keeping," but it found "no evidence of intentional misconduct. . . ." It told Borer to issue a clarification of a study of heart function under stress that was published in 1983 in *The American Journal of Cardiology*. It said that, for the next 3 years, copies of its report should be given to anyone at NIH who is considering putting him on a peer review panel or giving him research money.

Jacobstein, a nuclear medicine specialist, brought what he regarded as serious deficiencies in Borer's work to the attention of NIH in 1983 through a Washington attorney, Harold Green. These problems included confusion over the number of observers evaluating radionuclide angiocardiograms; whether they were blinded to crucial variables in the experiment; what the angle of the camera was and the implications of that; the adequacy of the calibration of a bicycle ergometer; and whether patients were on drugs that might have affected study results.

The NIH has taken a powerfully long time to come to a conclusion, in part because of many discrepancies between the accounts given by Borer and Jacobstein, which were reportedly exacerbated by per-

sonal animosity between the two researchers. After a preliminary investigation, NIH in 1985 solicited the opinions of outside experts. The NIH committee, headed by George J. Galasso, associate director for extramural affairs, noted in its report that some of Jacobstein's charges "are not usually within the scope of a misconduct investigation," and that the conflict arose at a time when NIH and the research community had not yet developed a consensus on scientific misconduct and what to do about it.

The NIH report criticizes Cornell for dismissing the matter after conducting a "hasty" inquiry. But it expresses satisfaction that the medical college has now developed a policy for dealing with allegations of misconduct and has pledged to subject Borer's work to "special internal review" for a year.

Borer told *Science* "I'm glad that NIH has confirmed the absence of intentional misconduct. I regret that errors in description of methodology were associated with a published paper prepared under my supervision. As director of a team I have to take responsibility for whatever the team does."

Jacobstein is not happy with the outcome and feels that the NIH failed to address "the two most important issues." He says the agency failed to consider the responsibility borne by Borer's coauthors, thereby "sending a clear message that these kinds of investigations will be as limited as possible." He also says NIH let Cornell off the hook even though the university supplied it with information that turned out to be "grossly inaccurate." If funding agencies "are going to put the primary responsibility for managing research misconduct on the universities as they seem to be doing, then they cannot look the other way when the institutions fail to act in a responsible manner." ■

CONSTANCE HOLDEN