

Science Committee Okays Supercollider

The House Science, Space and Technology Committee has recently approved legislation to construct the \$5.6-billion Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). The bill (HR 3228), which still must be voted on by the full House and pass the Senate, sets out a 3-year spending plan for the SSC in accordance with the schedule outlined by President Reagan (*Science*, 17 April, p. 246).

The bill also calls on President Reagan to treat the SSC as an incremental program that is separate from ongoing scientific research. To help assure that the SSC does not draw funds away from other research, the bill would require the Office of Science and Technology Policy to prepare detailed 2-year financial plans for all government science programs. These plans would accompany the President's annual budget submission to Congress.

Enactment of this House bill will not insure the construction of the SSC. The project cannot move ahead until the House and Senate appropriations committees provide funding. If Congress ultimately funds the SSC, Japan and the Soviet Union, which have expressed interest in participating in the project, may come forth with concrete proposals for providing equipment or direct funding for the SSC. Some European countries also might help fund the project.

The legislation would impose a number of restrictions on the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Administration:

- DOE would have to conduct annual reviews of developments in basic and applied research and advise Congress on how evolving technologies in areas such as superconductivity could affect the SSC's design, performance, and cost. The Congressional Budget Office also would review DOE's cost estimates for the SSC and report to Congress within 60 days of the completion of the project's design.

- A project manager for the SSC would have to be selected by end of FY 1988. A conflict-of-interest provision prevents the department from contracting with any organization or individual that has provided technical advice on the SSC, unless the department can demonstrate that no other contractor is fit to manage the project.

In addition, DOE would be required to use open competition to select contractors for building the project and for operating the facility when it enters service. The department currently may choose a contractor on a noncompetitive basis under certain circumstances. ■ **MARK CRAWFORD**

Briefing:

Alexander Bearn: New Hughes Trustee

The seven trustees of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute have elected Alexander G. Bearn to their ranks. Bearn fills the slot vacated by Donald S. Fredrickson who resigned from Hughes in June (*Science*, 12 June, p. 1417).

Bearn, 64, is senior vice president for medical and scientific affairs in the international division of Merck & Co., the giant pharmaceutical house. For more than 20 years, he was at Rockefeller University, also academic home to Hughes' new president, Purnell W. Choppin. Bearn earned his M.D. at the University of London and has made research contributions in the area of human genetics, one of the principal disciplines of interest to the Hughes institute. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. ■

B.J.C.

AIDS 101

Last winter at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), a geneticist decided to teach an undergraduate class on AIDS, a course that would not only visit such areas as virology and etiology, but would travel the entire cultural, political, and ethical landscape surrounding the deadly virus. Designed for 10 students, the professor squeezed in 14 paying customers.

This winter UCLA is giving Richard Siegel the use of Room 100 in Moore Hall, the largest auditorium on campus. "It holds something like 479 seats, but the fire marshal will let us set up some chairs in the aisles," says Siegel. Enrollment in Biology 40, "AIDS and Other Sexual Transmitted Diseases: The Modern Plague," is expected to top 500. Colleagues have suggested Siegel prepare a waiting list.

"The right of a country to call itself civilized might be decided by how we react to AIDS," says Siegel, a man who considers himself more of an educator now than a scientist. "AIDS is the way to educate students about such a wide range of ideas. The topic grabs them. It hooks them in. It makes them think. Because the epidemic is something very real to kids on campus."

Siegel takes an interdisciplinary tack. Readings are as likely to come from the scientific literature as from Shakespeare, the Bible, or *Moby Dick*. Historical context may be gleaned from the plague of the Egyptians,

the Black Death, or the early battle against syphilis. At least a dozen guest lecturers will come from medicine, public health, philosophy, literature, law, economics, and history, as well as from the gay and lesbian community. AIDS patients will also make an appearance, as will a prostitute. "She'll get the usual \$100 honorarium and she'll introduce topics like adaptive change and social psychology," says Siegel.

Responses from students have been extremely positive. Evaluations from last year's class placed Siegel near the top of the scale. "Most valuable . . . academically and personally," wrote one senior. "I haven't changed. I'm the same old prof," reports Siegel, who says in his other biology courses he rates about average. "It's the students who are really responding." ■ **W.B.**

Progress Report on NSF

The National Science Foundation passed another milestone in this year's appropriations marathon when the Senate on 15 October approved the foundation's funding bill for 1988. The next step is a House-Senate conference to reconcile differences between the versions passed by each. The Senate bill calling for a total \$1.867 billion came closest to matching the Administration request of \$1.893 billion. The House voted a total \$1.793 billion. NSF's 1987 appropriation was \$1.623. Still obscuring the finish line, however, are the uncertainties generated by the Gramm-Rudman deficit reduction formula that could impose cuts of 8% or more on federal agency budgets. ■ **J.W.**

Science Agencies Brace for 1988 Budget Cuts

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Reaffirmation Act of 1987 will go into effect in a month unless Congress and the White House can agree on a way to reduce the federal deficit by \$24 billion. Budget reductions will be shared equally by defense and most civilian agencies, excepting entitlement programs.

On 20 October the Office of Management and Budget notified federal agencies that programs could be cut 8.7% below 1987 program levels (after an inflation factor of 4.2% is added). The 8.7% will be subtracted from 1988 budgets if a research program is covered by an appropriation bill that passes Congress before 20 November. If Congress does not finish its appropriations work until later, it could adjust R&D priorities to cope with automatic budget cuts. ■ **M.C.**