

months to bring their products into compliance or the registrations would be canceled. "That is the approach we were kind of expecting," he says.

EPA spokesman Al Heier acknowledges that EPA has the authority to move against the old pesticides in this way, but the agency "intends to do it as accurately as possible," he says. "The process we are using is a good process, but it's slow," Heier contends.

EPA's new policy faces potential legal and legislative challenges. Hathaway of the Natural Resources Defense Council says that her group may consider taking the agency to court, but until EPA takes its first action under the new policy there may be no legal

basis for a challenge. She says she is particularly disturbed because the new policy "does not guarantee that pesticide use will shift to safer new ones over the old ones already on the market."

As for Congress, legislation introduced last year by Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) would have speeded up the review of old pesticides and set some firm standards for how they should be judged. The bill did not make it out of committee, but it is expected to be reintroduced next year. In the meantime, Congress simply directed EPA, in a pesticide bill approved late in the session, to complete its review of all old pesticides on the market within 9 years.

■ COLIN NORMAN

Congress Passes First AIDS Bill

In its first major legislative response to the AIDS epidemic, Congress passed a bill last week that calls for a suite of AIDS education and prevention programs, establishes a home health care program for those suffering from the syndrome, and gives to the federal health bureaucracy hundreds of new employees.

Congress has been trying to pass an AIDS policy act for several years, but the legislation always becomes bogged by skirmishes between liberals and conservatives over such contentious issues as discrimination against persons with AIDS, calls for mandatory testing, and guarantees of confidentiality for those tested for the AIDS virus.

The bill passed last week was clearly a compromise. The legislation skirts the issue of confidentiality of test results. It is also silent on the issue of discrimination against persons with AIDS or those testing positive for the virus. Many public health officials, as well as the President's AIDS commission, fear that those who need to be tested and

counseled most may refuse to come forward without guarantees of confidentiality and protection.

The bill, which was pushed through Congress by Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), is part of a package that directs about \$1.2 billion toward the fight against AIDS.

Included in the bill is the addition of 780 new employees for the Public Health Service. The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services has 90 days to tell Congress how he plans to divvy up the slots among his various institutes.

The bill calls for broader clinical trials for AIDS drugs, and requests the National Institutes of Health to evaluate more rigorously unlicensed treatments used by AIDS patients and to expand its investigation of experimental drugs outside clinical protocols. In addition, all grant monies for AIDS research must be awarded with 9 months of announcement of the grant.

There is also \$165 million for grants to the states to fund AIDS prevention programs targeted at halting the spread of the AIDS virus in the general public and in the high-risk groups. Another \$105 million is earmarked for a national AIDS information campaign, which will include a toll-free hot line and will allow the government to purchase paid advertisements.

Another \$100 million is given to states to counsel and test individuals for the AIDS virus. For AIDS sufferers, Congress allotted \$100 million to states for the support of home health care. Finally, Congress created a national AIDS commission to monitor the epidemic and the implementation of the recommendations of the President's AIDS commission.

■ WILLIAM BOOTH

Supercomputer Centers Enter New Phase

In the next few weeks, the National Science Foundation will begin the process of deciding whether to extend funding of its five national supercomputer centers. A 5-year cycle of funding for the centers will end in 1990 and NSF will decide whether to fund the program for a subsequent 5 years.

The five centers are located at Cornell, Princeton, the University of Pittsburgh/Carnegie Mellon, University of Illinois, and University of California at San Diego. They are all submitting proposals for renewal. Applications from other institutions are not being considered.

The centers were created in response to complaints in the early 1980s that university scientists engaged in basic research requiring supercomputers lacked access to the fast machines. The foundation's supercomputer program started in 1984 with a first phase in which NSF leased time for researchers at five institutions with supercomputers. The second phase, for which the five current centers were selected, was set for the 5 years from 1985 to 1990.

The centers vary in organization, but all are government-university-industry partnerships. NSF funding averages \$10 million a year per center and contributions from state governments and industry amount to about the same sum. Total NSF funding for the centers this year is \$54 million. NSF officials say that since 1985, the NSF portion of total funds has dropped from 60% to about 50%.

The centers are expected to serve all disciplines and have national rather than regional clienteles, but each has developed its own research specialty. Cornell, for example, emphasizes parallel processing, the Pittsburgh center is favored by biomedical researchers, and Illinois and San Diego are strong on graphics.

Cornell's supercomputer center recently received a 2-year NSF grant of \$19.3 million that gives Cornell a full 5 years of funding and puts it on the same footing as the four other NSF-backed national supercomputer centers in their bid for a renewal of funding in 1990.

While NSF director Erich Bloch has indicated that NSF is disposed to continue to support the program there are no guarantees for particular centers that NSF will renew support for the next phase. All the centers complain that they are financially stretched, but as a group they have made commitments to upgrade their computing capacity that translate into fiscal optimism.

■ JOHN WALSH



Henry Waxman: Pushed his bill through but had to accept compromises on confidentiality.

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