

cates of all stripes are looking to their allies in the Administration and Congress to prevent a bad situation from becoming even worse. In particular, they are hoping for ammunition from a review of the fusion program by the President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST). The review, which has been delayed by haggling between White House and DOE officials over its scope, is due to be completed in June or July—about the same time that more exact cost data on ITER are ready. “In the best of all possible worlds, they could say go ahead with TPX and ITER,” says Krebs.

Even if they do get support from PCAST, however, Congress could be a hard sell. Krebs is counting on support from New Jersey lawmakers in the upcoming budget fight, but she'll have to do it without a key advo-

cate, former Representative Dean Gallo (R-NJ), who died last year. Supporters are also likely to face some powerful opponents: A bill co-sponsored last year by Representative John Kasich (R-OH)—now the chair of the budget committee—called for major cuts to the fusion program. “Everything is going to be under the microscope,” says Bruce Cuthbertson, Kasich's press secretary.

Other influential Republicans, like Representative Robert Walker (R-PA), the new chair of the Science Committee, could serve as a bulwark against deep cuts in the budget. But Walker, who advised Kasich last year on science issues, has never been an advocate of fusion: His real interest lies in promoting hydrogen as an alternative energy source. “We need to take a look at the money we're spending in the fusion area,” he told reporters last

month. Walker also says he's concerned about the recent increase in the cost of TPX. But Rush Holt, deputy director of the Princeton lab, says that the \$160 million increase over 1993 estimates—a rise of 28%—was caused mostly by funding shortages that have delayed the start of construction, rather than poor management or technical uncertainties.

Davies argues that fusion should be a natural for the new Republican majority. “It exactly fits what government should be doing,” she says—investing in a venture that is too risky for industry but one that promises significant gains for society. But, she acknowledges, “the situation is very serious, and it is high time we start preparing ourselves for the worst. Then we just hope it doesn't turn out that way.”

—Andrew Lawler

## THE NEW CONGRESS

### Agency Chiefs Seek Help With Budgets

The standing-room-only crowd was prepared for fireworks. But at last week's 3-hour hearing in the House Rayburn Building—the first meeting between the new Republican-dominated House Science Committee and science agency chiefs—there were mostly soft words and promises of a bipartisan effort to protect research in the months ahead.

“There is a mutual willingness to cooperate here,” Representative Robert Walker (R-PA), the new panel chair, told *Science* afterward. “I think we can have the kind of dialogue that will ensure we achieve a common voice.” Added Walker's predecessor, Representative George Brown (D-CA): “In many respects, we're all on the same wavelength.”

The common foe uniting the two sides is the budget-cutting frenzy sweeping both the White House and the Republican majority (see p. 164). Walker is not immune to such sentiments: He wants to pull the plug on efforts like the Commerce Department's \$430 million Advanced Technology Program (ATP), for example, and limit the growth of applied research programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF). But he says he intends to fight proposals to cut the government's overall investment in science and technology. And his status as the second-ranking Republican on the powerful Budget Committee gives him influence in what steps the new majority may take.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) “is very much in favor of keeping a strong presence in the sciences,” Walker emphasized, adding that Gingrich made Walker a leader on the Budget Committee in part for this very reason. The committee chair, Representative John Kasich (R-OH), is working on a budget plan that would reduce federal spending dramatically to pay for tax cuts. This plan, which will be written into a budget

resolution, will play a major role in setting the Republican agenda by giving the Appropriations Committee very specific directions to follow in carving up the 1996 budget.

To ward off spending cuts, however, Walker will need the support of the Clinton Administration, which will submit its 1996 budget request to Congress in early February. “The difficulty will be if the Administration comes forward with a whole load of science cuts,” said Walker. “It will be very, very diffi-



**Science summit.** Last week's hearing featured, from left: Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, science adviser John Gibbons, NASA's Daniel Goldin, EPA's Carol Browner, and NSF's Neal Lane.

cult for me in the Budget Committee to defend programs the Administration has said are not priorities.”

John Gibbons, the president's science and technology adviser, pledged his support at the hearing, telling the science committee that “we'll stand and fight with you” to resist budget cuts. Like Walker, Gibbons can also use some help. Administration officials say he has had limited influence over the budget requests, despite a presidential report last summer that proposed increasing the nation's spending on science to 3% of the gross national product from its current level of 2.6%.

Although collegiality was the watchword

at last week's hearing, there were some differences of opinion between Walker and the science chiefs—in addition to Gibbons, the panel heard from National Aeronautics and Space Administration Administrator Daniel Goldin, NSF Director Neal Lane, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Carol Browner, and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. Walker wants to loosen environmental regulations, encourage private sector research and development through tax breaks, and withdraw funding for applied research programs designed to benefit U.S. companies

directly. None of the agency chiefs endorsed these ideas, but neither did they want to appear openly antagonistic toward their new congressional masters. “The devil lies in the details,” warned Gibbons. “We have common goals, but ultimately we have to see whether we have common ideas about where we put our resources.” Commerce's Brown was a little more

forthright: He pledged to fight efforts to kill ATP, denying that the program “picks winners and losers” and arguing instead that it simply lends a hand to small entrepreneurs with good but risky ideas.

Specific disagreements aside, the Republican takeover will be a boon to science, promises Walker, who becomes quite animated when discussing the subject. “We are certainly not looking to hang science by any stretch of the imagination,” he told reporters. “Science is going to be strengthened by a lot of the decisions that will be made in the next couple of years.”

—Andrew Lawler