



Cause with clout. Financier Michael Milken leads prostate cancer research lobby.

Patient Groups Back Army-Funded Research

The Department of Defense's (DOD's) medical research budget is being stretched in different directions in Congress, and the final appropriation seems likely to increase. The reason: Where once there was one, now there are two influential groups working the case. Breast cancer advocates are trying to maintain support for the existing Army breast cancer research program, while a new prostate cancer lobby—led by a group called CaPCURE backed by financier Michael Milken of San Diego—is now vying for a piece of the action.

Breast cancer lobbyists persuaded Congress 3 years ago to give DOD \$210 million for a peer-reviewed breast cancer research program, and this year the prostate cancer lobby asked Congress for DOD research money for its own cause. CaPCURE spokesperson Michael Reese says the ease with which they found support came as a surprise. Led by its

chair, Senator Mark Hatfield (R-OR), the Senate appropriations panel has added \$100 million to DOD's budget for prostate cancer, while giving breast cancer \$150 million (*Science*, 5 July, p. 25).

The House has allocated just \$100 million for breast cancer and nothing for prostate cancer. A Hatfield staffer predicts the two houses will split the difference at a conference to reconcile the bills in a few weeks.

The two lobbies say they support each other's causes, but hesitate to join forces. "That might give the impression that we should share a pie the same size as last year's"—\$70 million for breast cancer, says Mary Jo Kahn of the National Breast Cancer Coalition. Reese says next year his group may seek funds from other sources, such as the Veterans' Administration. The goal is to "enlarge the entire pie for cancer research," he says.

Keeping Score Could Hurt EPSCoR

Each year the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is required to compile a list of federal programs that, if cut or eliminated, could reduce the deficit. Although the list contains dozens of programs that are politically safe—such as

the space station and the National Institutes of Health budget—most agencies would rather not be mentioned at all. So it was a bit of a shock to the National Science Foundation (NSF) that the CBO's newest report, released this month, includes its small but beloved Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) as a potential target.

For one thing, it's the first time any NSF program has been singled out for scrutiny. "NSF's basic research had always been seen as untouchable," says one CBO analyst. And EPSCoR, which aims to help have-not states do better in the fight for federal research dollars, enjoys broad bipartisan support—one Senate aide calls it "the research equivalent of Head Start"—and its presence in 18 states gives it enviable geographic clout.

Supporters of the \$80-million-a-year program, which began at NSF in 1980 and has since spread to six other R&D agencies, say they aren't aware of any organized opposition. They speculate that CBO, in a time of fiscal restraint, is simply following orders to highlight programs that could be considered nonessential. Still, "it's not a good sign," says Joe Danek, head of the EPSCoR Foundation. "We'll be keeping an eye on it."

NSF Claims Its Piece Of the Rock

A Martian meteorite that may harbor signs of ancient life has become the hottest rock since the Rosetta stone. And two U.S. agencies involved in its discovery and analysis—NASA and the National Science Foundation (NSF)—are vying for the limelight.

So far the light has shone on NASA. On 7 August, at a press conference shortly after the news broke of the upcoming paper (*Science*, 16 August, p. 924), NASA chief Dan Goldin pledged to make sure scientists got a chance to help confirm or refute the startling results. NASA is soon expected to announce a \$1 million competition to learn more about the 1.9-kilogram ALH84001 meteorite, discovered in eastern Antarctica in 1984 during an NSF-funded expedition.

While NSF officials have no problem with the offer—more than NASA is spending to analyze the other 11 Martian meteorites—they want it to be known that studying Antarctic meteorites is a team effort. NASA's Johnson Space Center operates the Antarctic meteorite lab, but the collection is housed at the Smithsonian Museum. And gathering meteorites is a sliver of the overall U.S. Antarctic program run by NSF, which held its own press conference last week.

ALH84001 "certainly doesn't belong to NASA," says one unhappy NSF manager. "It's government property, and there's a well-defined procedure for deciding how samples are distributed." That's the Meteorite Working Group, 10 government and university scientists who gather twice a year to sift through hundreds of requests for samples.

The group meets next month, but any researcher who has asked for a piece of ALH84001 may have to wait a while for an answer. The panel will likely defer its decisions so they can be coordinated with NASA's funding decisions, possibly at a special meeting in December.

Internet to Open New Land Office?

The mad scramble for frontier property that's riled users of the Internet may be eased if a new proposal is accepted by the loose coalition that runs the global computer network. In recent months, the scuffle to grab "domain names"—addresses by which groups, companies, and individuals are identified—has intensified. Entrepreneurs are buying names wholesale and then selling them at inflated prices. And conflicts are arising over names that have been trademarked (*Science*, 5 May 1995, p. 628).

At present, domain names such as "aas.org" or "pepsi.com" are registered by a government contractor called Network Solutions. The company charges \$50 a year on a first-come, first-served basis. But Internet overseers are thinking of ways to create acres of new domains, managed by other private registry keepers. "Companies interested

could apply and ... those with good plans could be chartered," says Jon Postel of the University of Southern California's Information Sciences Institute. Next month, says Postel, Internet managers—of whom he is one—will issue a call for proposals. More companies may be registering names by early next year, says Postel—and there should be dozens more top-level domain names (such as .com or .gov).

But some doubt Postel's scheme will end the squabbling. Tony Rutkowski, former head of the Internet Society and now director of Internet development at General Magic in Sunnyvale, California, says it "will only multiply the problem." Rutkowski favors the creation of an international consortium to oversee the Net. The debate is one of several to be aired next month at a conference, Coordination and Administration of the Internet, at Harvard University.