pledged to devote more resources to efforts by their scientists to improve dialogue with the public and news media and also to take such efforts into account when they evaluate those researchers. In addition, the memo says "an incentive system is to be developed that will be suitable to offer the prospect of rewards to those scientists who are actively engaged in fostering dialogue with the public." The Science Promotion association has already posted a grant application form on its Web site (www.stifterverband.de) for grants ranging from $11,500 to $35,000 for scientists' programs that would help explain research to students, teachers, churches, local groups, and the news media. The grant recipients will be chosen by a jury, led by Joachim Treusch, chair of the Jülich national research center, and including prominent German science journalists.

The German initiative parallels similar efforts in the United Kingdom and the United States, which Germans believe have helped connect science and society. In addition to the PUSH grants, Treusch is leading an effort to organize a major science festival in Berlin in 2001 which he says might take some pointers from the annual meetings of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (the publisher of *Science*) and its British counterpart on focusing attention on science. Says Treusch: "We have the obligation to give German science a major step forward into the new century with this PUSH."

–ROBERT KOENIG

DEFENSE SCIENCE

Outlook Improves for Research Funding

Funding for defense-related research has languished since the Cold War, even as some civilian research budgets have spurted ahead. Now Congress is moving to slow the trend, proposing to erase cuts in military science that were requested by the Clinton Administration. But some administrators and lobbyists worry that the gains may not hold in an especially uncertain budget year.

In February, the White House submitted a 2000 budget request that shrank the Department of Defense's (DOD's) $4.3 billion basic and applied research accounts by 5%. Although the Clinton budget would raise overall defense spending by a hefty $12.6 billion, it held the Pentagon's basic research account steady at $1.1 billion and trimmed the applied account by more than $230 million, to $2.9 billion. If approved by Congress, the cuts would have pushed DOD research spending to its lowest level in 35 years when adjusted for inflation.

CREDIT: (TOP) HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

That prospect greatly worries university administrators. DOD is the third-largest source of academic research funds (after the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation), with more than 350 U.S. schools getting defense dollars. Some disciplines are especially dependent on military support: The Pentagon provides 70% of federal funding for electrical engineering, 60% for computer sciences, and about one-third for math and oceanography, for example.

In an April response to the threat, 19 university groups, scientific societies, and business groups formed a Coalition for National Security Research. The lobbying effort—coordinated by Liz Baldwin of the Optical Society of America and Peter Leone of the American Association of Engineering Societies, both in Washington, D.C.—bore fruit late last month, as the full Senate and the House Armed Services Committee separately recommended defense spending levels that are friendlier to research. Lawmakers suggested spending $7 million to $15 million more on basic research than the White House request, and they nearly reversed the cut in applied science with a proposed budget of $3.1 billion. A Senate appropriations subcommittee—which actually approves spending—did even better, voting an even smaller cut in applied research and a $35 million boost for basic science.

Congressional staffers say that lawmakers eager to fund specific initiatives, such as one to develop an antimissile laser and another to combat bioterrorism, fueled the increases. But the concerns raised by university presidents and the coalition also played a role. "We felt their pain," says one House staffer. Indeed, both Armed Services committees scolded DOD for its paltry request, with the House panel saying "it does not believe DOD has a coherent R&D funding strategy."

Although the numbers are preliminary, some coalition members say they are a good omen. "It was heartening to see that the members were concerned enough to up the numbers," says Leone. But he and others admit they are far from the coalition's goal of a 2% overall R&D boost this year. That reality "is disappointing," says Greg Schutz of the American Chemical Society in Washington, D.C., who worries that any cut in applied science budgets could threaten some physical chemistry labs.

Schutz and others also fret that success could be ephemeral, pointing to the rising costs of the Kosovo conflict and mounting pressure to beef up other portions of the defense budget. "The tide has been going in and out on the budget process all year," he says.

–DAVID MALAKOFF

CLINICAL RESEARCH

NIH Ethics Office Tapped for a Promotion

A government watchdog that monitors the treatment of patients and animals in federally funded research may be about to develop a more powerful bite. A panel recommended last week that the unit, called the Office for Protection from Research Risks (OPRR), be moved up the federal hierarchy. It currently resides in the office of National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Harold Varmus, and the panel urged that it be shifted to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Varmus agreed that this would be appropriate to avoid an apparent conflict between NIH's dual roles as funder and regulator of clinical studies.

On the move? OPRR chief Ellis (right) and staffer Tom Puglisi speak at a House hearing.

The proposal to give OPRR higher status was discussed on 3 June at a meeting of Varmus's scientific advisory committee and was approved so quickly that some observers felt this was exactly what Varmus wanted. "It looked like a done deal," says one non-NIH expert on bioethics who has followed the process closely. He thinks NIH may have decided to make a change after media and congressional attention focused on recent lapses in the treatment of human subjects. Last year, for example, witnesses at a congressional hearing blasted OPRR—which is supposed to keep tabs on research funded by 17 federal agencies—and others for lax enforcement of rules designed to protect volunteer research subjects (*Science*, 19 June