

## 2000 BUDGET

# Thanks to NIH, R&D Ends Up With 5% Boost

After raising some hackles early on, Congress wound up delivering a hefty increase in federal R&D spending. But some worry that NIH's increases are skewing the balance

Like a television hero who overcomes certain death midway through each week's episode, the federal R&D budget survived another harrowing adventure this year to emerge with just a few bruises. Saving the biggest for last, legislators bestowed a record spending increase on biomedical research to accompany a hefty boost for military science and raises to most other major science programs granted earlier this fall. Overall, federal R&D spending in the fiscal year that began 1 October will rise by 5%, to \$83.3 billion, according to an analysis by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS, publisher of *Science*).

But although many in the science establishment are pleased by the outcome, this year's appropriations have further tilted the balance in federal science spending toward biomedical research. For the first time, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will control more than 50% of the government's basic research pot, now at \$19.1 billion, according to AAAS estimates. "It is a problem when biomedical fields get big increases and other disciplines don't keep up," says Representative John Porter (R-IL), a key player in NIH's record \$2.3 billion boost, to \$17.9 billion (*Science*, 26 November, p. 1654). Adds Rita Colwell, director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), which received a \$240 million increase to \$3.91 billion, "It's a little disconcerting to see the share of federal funding for the natural sciences, engineering, and math drop from over 50% to 30% in a generation."

Some agencies, however, were happy to survive this year without suffering major cuts. In August, for instance, the House sent a chill through the space science community when it cut NASA's budget by nearly \$1 billion. That

vote, along with moves to hold down requested increases for the Department of Energy (DOE) and NSF, prompted D. Allan Bromley—a Yale University engineer and science adviser to former President George Bush—to proclaim in *The Washington Post* that "this year's federal budget for science is a disaster."



## HOW RESEARCH FARED

Department/Agency	FY 99	FY 00*	% change
	(millions of \$)		
National Institutes of Health	15,614	17,914	14.7%
National Cancer Institute	2,902	3,332	14.8%
Natl. Heart, Lung, & Blood Inst.	1,783	2,040	14.5%
Human Genome Research	269	337	25.3%
Complementary & Alt. Medicine	50	69	37.6%
Extramural building funds	30	75	150%
National Science Foundation	3,671	3,912	6.6%
Research	2,770	2,966	7.1%
Education	662	696	5.1%
NASA			
Life and Microgravity Sciences	264	277	5.2%
Office of Space Science	2,119	2,198	3.7%
Office of Earth Science	1,414	1,455	2.9%
Space Station	2,270	2,331	2.7%
Energy (Office of Science)	2,683	2,800	4.4%
Fusion	230	250	8.8%
Nuclear physics	335	352	5.0%
Computational research	143	132	-7.7%
Defense (basic research)	1,112	1,177	5.8%
Commerce†			
NOAA	600	619	3.2%
Natl. Inst. of Standards & Tech.	468	475	1.5%
Department of the Interior			
U.S. Geological Survey	798	824	3.2%
EPA Science and Technology	669	645	3.6%
Smithsonian†	128	133	3.7%
Agriculture			
National Research Initiative	119	119	0%

\* Does not include 0.38% overall cut that could reduce specific program budgets by up to 15%. † AAAS estimate of funds spent on basic research.

By last week, however, Bromley had changed his tune. "The final product was much better than I had feared," Bromley said about compromises that reversed the NASA cuts and produced better-than-inflation increases for science programs at NSF and DOE.

Boosters of defense-related research were also able to overcome early threats. In February, the White House submitted a request that shrank the Department of Defense's (DOD's) \$4.3 billion basic and applied research accounts by 5%. The cuts would have pushed DOD research spending to its lowest level in 35 years when adjusted for inflation (*Science*, 11 June, p. 1749). But Congress rejected that plan and approved a 6% increase that boosted military R&D to nearly \$4.6 billion and reversed years of decline. The White House plan "was dead on arrival," says one Republican House aide. "They

knew we were going to hear people screaming about the cuts—and we did." In particular, he notes, universities that depend on the military for a majority of their math and engineering research dollars were especially vocal. Overall, defense-related R&D will come to \$42.5 billion, or 51% of total federal R&D spending, according to AAAS.

Republican leaders in Congress were generally successful in attacking programs seen as advancing the presidential hopes of Vice President Al Gore. A slew of Gore-backed environmental research initiatives within the Department of Interior were killed outright, for example, while NASA was told to suspend plans for Triana, a \$75 million Earth-viewing satellite Gore backed. Republicans also trimmed \$130 million from a \$366 million information technology initiative that Gore championed, and approved just half of the \$4 million that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) had requested for a Gore-endorsed project to scatter data-collecting buoys across the world's oceans. Such projects, one Democratic House aide said, "might have fared better if the White House had been hands-off."

—DAVID MALAKOFF

\* A Preview Report for *Congressional Action on Research and Development in the FY 2000 Budget* ([www.aaas.org/spp/dspp/rd/caprev00.htm](http://www.aaas.org/spp/dspp/rd/caprev00.htm)).