

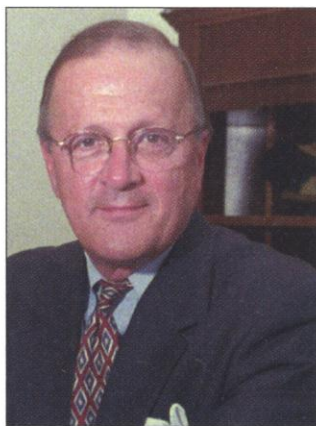
U.S. SCIENCE POLICY

New Faces Please and Puzzle Researchers

Science advocates are reacting with cheers, groans, and puzzlement to a host of recent picks for key science policy-making jobs in Washington. The choices include a new chair of the House spending panel that controls the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH); another that oversees research at NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the National Science Foundation; and the new heads of DOE and EPA.

The appointment prompting the warmest reception is the ascension of Representative Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) to lead the House Science Committee. He replaces Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who becomes top dog at the higher profile Judiciary panel. Boehlert, a 10-term lawmaker who is one of the House's most liberal Republicans, "will be a breath of fresh air," predicts physicist Michael Lubell, lead lobbyist for the American Physical Society. Unlike the prickly, highly partisan Sensenbrenner, who relished grilling NASA Administrator Dan Goldin over cost overruns on the international space station and DOE officials on their contribution to CERN's Large Hadron Collider, Boehlert is likely to strike a more measured pose, lobbyists say.

New staff director David Goldston, a long-time Boehlert aide, says his boss is likely to focus on math and science education, alternative energy sources, and environmental research. And he plans to reverse a rule barring scientists coming to Washington for 1-year congressional fellowships from working on the committee. But like Sensenbrenner, Boehlert may oppose a largely symbolic bill that calls for doubling the federal government's spending on R&D. Boehlert believes there may be more effective strategies for boosting science budgets.



E-trading. Sherwood Boehlert, new head of the House Science Committee, is partial to education, energy, and environmental research.

DOE supporters are looking to a confirmation hearing next week for clues to the thoughts of Michigan Republican Spencer

Abraham, chosen to lead DOE, the government's third largest funder of basic research. Defeated in November after a single Senate term, Abraham had taken little interest in energy issues and was one of four senators to sponsor a 1999 bill that called for dismantling the department. By 2000, however, Abraham was calling for increased funding for DOE's \$3 billion Office of Science.

Meanwhile, climate scientists hope that President-elect George Bush's pick to lead the EPA, New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, had only a temporary lapse when she confused the cause of climate change and ozone depletion in a recent interview with *The New York Times*.

Global warming science is "still somewhat uncertain," she said, adding that "clearly there's a hole in the ozone that has been identified. But I saw a study the other day that showed it was closing. It's not as clear, the cause and effect, as we would like it to be."

—DAVID MALAKOFF



Post Porter. Ralph Regula has big shoes to fill as he takes over the House spending panel that oversees NIH.

Although Regula "is no John Porter," says one lobbyist, "he'll be under pressure from the Republican leadership to sustain NIH's budget increases." DOE lobbyists are tracking the moves of Representative Sonny Callahan (R-AL), a relatively unknown quantity who now heads the spending panel that oversees the agency's budget.

In the Senate, it appears that Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) will retain his post as chair of the committee that oversees NIH. Late last year Specter said he wanted a respite from the bitter budget wars. But some observers predict that new power-sharing rules—including putting an equal number of Republicans and Democrats on every committee and allowing panels to move controversial bills to the Senate floor on a tie vote—will make Specter's life more pleasant. "He won't be caught in as much crossfire," predicts one lobbyist.

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SOLAR, PLANETARY STUDIES

Two Fields Prepare to Take the Long View

Taking a page from a successful playbook written by U.S. astronomers, researchers who study the sun and its interactions with Earth's atmosphere will begin an intense effort next week to set long-term scientific and mission goals. The idea behind this study, and a similar exercise being considered by planetary researchers, is to present a unified front before federal agencies and Congress. But the tactic is a gamble: The diverse interests of the solar community don't fit easily under one umbrella, and some planetary scientists say the technique is not well suited to a small field with only a handful of missions.

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