

factual," said William Welch, assistant secretary of legislation at HHS.

The letter is far from enthusiastic about the Waxman bill. It says the bill "will not impede" biomedical research. "Indeed, the bill will allow the Congress and the Executive Branch to move the Nation's research agenda in an orderly manner."

It also addresses the roles of the secretary and the NIH director and says the bill defines their authorities in a way that "is consistent with every other Departmental authority."

Waxman referred to the letter twice during floor debate on his bill 28 August. A House aide said later that Waxman "would not anticipate that Dr. Fredrickson would sign a letter if he doesn't support the bill."

In his opening remarks on the floor, Waxman also said the bill was supported by "many scientific and health groups." When asked later to name the groups, an aide cited organizations such as the American Nurses Association, the American Diabetes Association, and the Arthritis Foundation.

Other groups, however, that have actively opposed the legislation are the Association of American Medical Colleges, the Association of American Universities, and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.

If Waxman's bill does not pass this session, he could resurrect the issue in the next Congress. But "he'll have to start from scratch," said a biomedical lobbyist. In the meantime, scientists hope to convince more members of Congress to fend off another NIH reauthorization bill. And Kennedy is likely to reintroduce the proposal of a high-level advisory group, an aide said.—M.S.

Frank Press in Line for Academy Presidency

Unless the Ethics in Government Act stands in the way, White House science adviser Frank Press will be nominated to succeed Philip Handler as president of the National Academy of Sciences. Handler will step down next June after serving the maximum of 12 years in office.

Science has learned that nomi-

nating committee chairman Kenneth Pitzer announced the selection of Press to the Academy's governing council at a meeting in Woods Hole last August. Pitzer declines comment, saying that the nominating process, which has yet to go its full course, is "internal" Academy business. Press's name will be formally placed in nomination before the council when it meets next on 26 October.

The one major question that has to be answered by then is whether accepting the Academy presidency would put Press in an untenable position under provisions of the 1978 act which was passed to slow the revolving door through which federal workers pass to lucrative and influential positions in the private sector. Academy lawyers are studying the issue now.

Press, who has declared his interest in the job to the nominating committee, will say on the record only that he is "honored" to be considered.—B.J.C.

Politics Embroils NSF Directorate

The National Science Foundation (NSF) director-designate, John G. Slaughter, is still awaiting confirmation by the Senate because his nomination has become caught up in party politics. A compromise that would allow him to be confirmed is believed to be imminent.

Cause of the logjam is a Republican policy of blocking approval of certain presidential nominees on the grounds that new appointments should be made by whoever wins in November. Republicans have been able to stage a workable blockade on nominations by the threat of filibusters and other maneuvers.

By law, the NSF director's appointment is for a 6-year term, an arrangement which the scientific community has regarded as reinforcing the non-political status of the directorship. Not so well known is that the law's full provisions say that the director "shall serve for a term of six years unless sooner removed by the President." Sources on the minority side of the Senate say it is this presidential option that may make the Republicans will-

ing to turn loose the Slaughter nomination.

Republicans may also be relieved to see Slaughter, who was nominated in early July (*Science*, 1 August 1980), finally confirmed. A black, Slaughter would be the first to head a major federal science agency. His choice had gained general approval in the scientific community and Republicans would have found thwarting his appointment politically difficult to explain.

Slaughter's nomination was released after a meeting of the Labor and Human Resources Committee on 17 September. The nomination had been "reported out" of committee early in August, but a replay of the meeting was forced because no Republican had attended the first one and there were objections that the favorable vote was taken without enough senators present at one time to make a valid quorum.

The nomination is now on the so-called executive calendar, which means the nomination is taken up in executive session by the Senate and voted on without debate. Objection by a single senator can derail the process, and the decision to go that parliamentary route usually means that agreement has been reached by leaders of the two parties.

Also to be confirmed are seven new members of the National Science Board (NSB), the policy-making board of NSF, whose nominations were announced by the White House on 20 June. The NSB nominees had also been caught in the blockade of appointments. NSB members, of whom there are a total of 24, are appointed to 6-year terms. There is no qualification providing for presidential removal as there is in the case of the NSF director. The Republicans apparently decided, however, to make an exception apparently on grounds that board members, who are mostly chosen for their credentials in science and science administration, serve only part time.

The new appointees are, Peter T. Flawn, president, University of Texas; Mary L. Good, Louisiana State University; Peter D. Lax, New York University; Homer A. Neal, Indiana University; Mary Jane Osborne, University of Connecticut Health Center; Stuart A. Rice, University of Chicago; and Donald B. Rice, president, Rand Corporation.—J.W.