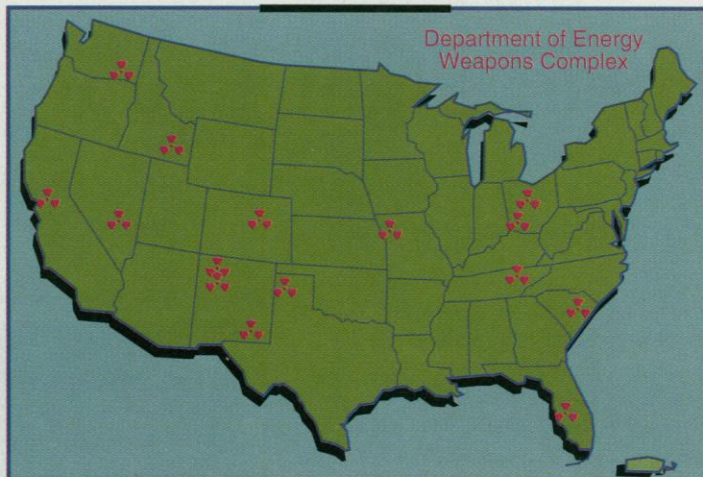


## Unsupported Priorities

■ In one of the greatest engineering challenges of the next several decades, the Department of Energy (DOE) intends to spend at least \$100 billion to clean up radioactive pollution at its nuclear weapons development complex. But the latest upgrade of a computer model designed to help DOE officials decide which hazardous waste sites to clean up first seems likely to generate some heated opposition over the next few weeks.

The computerized priority system draws a bright line between sites requiring emergency attention because they threaten public health and those whose problems can wait a few years. The system ranks contaminated sites by weighing a variety of factors such as health risk and environmental and regulatory impact.

Critics, however, charge that



Where there aren't enough data for DOE to "prioritize" cleanup sites, managers will rely on "expert opinion" instead.

because data characterizing the thousands of contaminated sites are scarce, DOE managers must fill in the gaps with assumptions. "It gives the pretense of an objective system," says James Werner, a senior environmental engineer at the Natural Resources Defense Council. "But

they're using a model to hide behind [while making] subjective decisions." One DOE official agrees that the priority system needs more data. "In some cases we're relying on expert opinion," says Pat Whitfield, DOE's associate director for environmental restoration.

Source: Office of Technology Assessment, 1991  
J. Cherry

## Tech Chief Leaves

■ With the recent resignation of William Phillips, associate director for industrial technology at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), the Bush Administration's much talked-about technology policy will be walking a much harder road.

Phillips, who officially left his job at the end of September for reasons of personal health, was hired from private industry in April 1990 in order to raise the profile of industrial technology in federal science policymaking circles. But sources say he ran afoul of the Administration's ideological split on civilian technology assistance—a split personified on one side by White House chief of staff John Sununu, who is opposed to such policies, and on the other by OSTP director D. Allan Bromley. Phillips' duties will be assumed by Eugene Wong, associate director for physical sciences and engineering, and his assistant Karl Erb, sources say.

Meanwhile, job-shuffling continues at the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Research (OER), where director William Happer Jr. has installed Robert Simon, now an aide to Energy Secretary James Watkins, as his new principal deputy director of the research division. The move essentially halves the bureaucratic domain of current OER deputy director James Decker, whom insiders have suggested will soon leave his post.

## NIH Director Healy Back in Charge of Misconduct Office

■ NIH Director Bernadine Healy, who last July recused herself from decisions affecting NIH's misconduct office (*Science*, 9 August, p. 618), is back in charge. In a 3 October memo, assistant secretary for health James Mason terminated Healy's recusal, saying he needed her input on misconduct issues. The only exception will be an investigation involving the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. As the clinic's research

director, Healy once led an inquiry in that case. Mason has transferred that investigation from NIH's Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI) to the Office of Scientific Integrity Review (OSIR), which does not report to Healy.

Noting that the Cleveland Clinic case might take 6 to 7 months to resolve, Mason wrote that this length of time was "too long" for Healy to be recused. He added that he thought an

August hearing before Representative John Dingell (D-MI) had failed to reveal a "reasonable basis" for Dingell's concerns that OSI's Cleveland Clinic investigation might have motivated Healy's actions against former OSI official Suzanne Hadley, who led that probe (*Science*, 2 August, p. 372).

As *Science* went to press, neither Dingell nor his staff had any response, although it's unlikely that they will be pleased.

## Wolpe Denounces a White House Shell Game

■ In a letter to presidential science adviser D. Allan Bromley that's not going to improve relations between Congress and the White House, Representative Howard Wolpe (D-MI) has accused the Bush Administration of a "cavalier and deceptive manner" in announcing a "new" science award program.

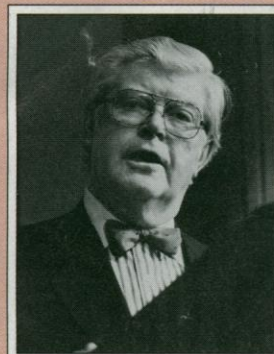


Howard Wolpe

On 16 September, President Bush announced the creation of the Presidential Faculty Fellows Program as a "new award program" intended to provide 5-year, \$500,000 grants to 30 untenured faculty members each year (*Science*, 27 September, p. 1485). What he didn't say—and what neither

the White House press office nor the National Science Foundation (NSF), which administers the program, bothered to point out—was that the money for these supposedly new grants was taken from the Presidential Young Investigators (PYI) award program. Last year, NSF made 220 PYI grants; this year, only 150 awards will be made.

"This is another example of the shell game that we see all too often in Washington," Wolpe wrote. He has asked Bromley to issue a public statement "detailing in full the origins and funding" of the faculty fellows program. An OSTP representative said the office had not yet prepared a response to Wolpe's letter.



D. Allan Bromley

Martin Kuhn