

the proposed survey out loud in front of the Senate. Kennedy refused. "The Senator does not want to read the questions because they are so rotten he would lose his case on the spot," said Helms. "Now these questions may be all right for a nightclub in Miami or Palm Beach at 2 o'clock in the morning on Saturday night, but they are not fit for young children to be asked in their own homes," he concluded. The amendment passed 51 to 46.

• **Reproduction research.**

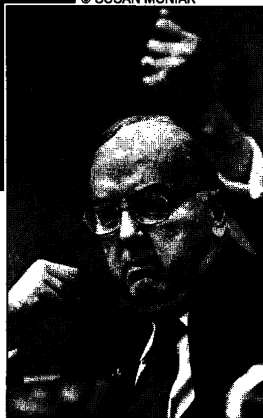
The new legislation would establish three centers for contraception research and two for infertility research around the country. Such centers have been a low priority for the Bush Administration.

• **Personnel system changes.** Language introduced by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) would allow NIH to set up its own personnel system separate from the rest of the federal government's. NIH has complained that federal hiring rules have made it hard to hire top scientists. The bill would also authorize NIH scientists to take sabbaticals at state uni-

versities. It also expands a newly created job category called the Senior Biomedical Research Service (SBRS) that provides salaries in excess of \$100,000 per year. SBRS



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Kennedy and Helms (right)

was designed to attract senior researchers to the Public Health Service, including NIH. Currently there are 350 positions permitted in SBRS. The bill would expand that number to 750.

• **Loan repayments.** To attract young researchers to the NIH intramural program, NIH would be granted authority to repay

student loans at a rate of up to \$20,000 for each year a researcher stayed at NIH.

But the prize supporters of the legislation fought hardest for was overturning the fetal tissue ban. And the question that may be most pondered as Congress awaits the promised Bush veto is why the president would stick to his guns when staunch conservatives like Strom Thurmond (R-SC), Jake Garn (R-UT), Alan Simpson (R-WY), and Robert Dole (R-KS) voted in favor of the measure. The Senate vote has given a huge psychological lift to scientists who have maintained programs in fetal tissue research with private funding. "We are absolutely delighted," says Eugene Redmond, a neuroscientist at Yale University who heads a team that is using fetal tissue implants to treat Parkinson's patients. He says his team is already preparing a grant application for NIH in the hope that federal funding will soon be available. To avoid a political fire fight in an election year, Bush may yet find a way to ignore the message he reads on his own lips.

—Joseph Palca

CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

California Evolution Defender Indicted

Religious fundamentalists in California who oppose the teaching of evolution in public schools have something to celebrate—one of their most stubborn opponents, state superintendent of schools Bill Honig, has been indicted by a grand jury on criminal conflict-of-interest charges. He is charged with funneling \$300,000 of federal funds into an education program run by his wife. If convicted, he could face up to 12 years in prison and be barred from holding public office again. Honig denies the charges, saying he's the victim of politics.

Honig, a Democrat who has held the elected post of schools chief for 10 years, has relentlessly fought attempts by the religious right to water down the teaching of evolution, insisting that it be included as a strong theme in the textbooks California buys. Because of California's clout with textbook publishers, the standards imposed by Honig have influenced textbook quality for the entire country (*Science*, 17 November 1989, p. 881).

Honig has also fought to prevent the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego from awarding master's degrees in biology, geology, and astrophysics, because the institute teaches the subjects from the perspective of biblical creation. That battle recently ended in a draw, after a change in state law removed nonaccredited graduate schools, including the Institute for Creation Research, from Honig's jurisdiction (*Science*, 21 February, p. 927).

Given his stance on evolution, as well as

his support for sex education and his opposition to a voucher system that would let parents use tax dollars to send their children to private schools, the religious right has plenty of reasons to want Honig out. And Honig says they are behind the present allegations that he used federal funds for personal gain. Honig does admit that four federally paid school-district employees worked with a nonprofit, privately funded program directed by his wife. But he denies that he benefited financially from the arrangement with the Quality Education Project, which encourages low-income parents to participate in their children's educa-

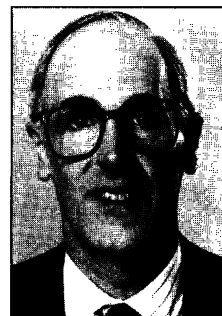
"This is a baseless charge. The weaker the charge, the stronger the implication that it is politics."

—Bill Honig

tion. "They [the state employees] did work in parent involvement in their school districts, and all the [federal] money went to their salaries," he told *Science*. "This is a baseless charge. The weaker the charge, the stronger the implication that it is politics."

Indeed, Honig has been locked in a power struggle, not only with conservative groups, but also with their supporters on the largely

conservative state education board, whose 10 members have been appointed by the past two Republican governors. Last fall the board sued Honig for more control of education decisions, and, according to ex-board member Kenneth Peters, several board members have been engaged in a campaign to "hang Bill Honig at all costs." *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported last week that board president Joe Stein, a vocal sympathizer with creationists, was the one who first brought the allegations against Honig to the attention of state attorney general Dan Lundgren. Lundgren's office will not comment on how it received the charges, and Stein did not return repeated calls from *Science*.



Regardless of who is behind the charges and whether or not Honig is convicted, creationists stand to gain, says Honig supporter Eugenie Scott, executive director of the Berkeley-based Center for Science Education. Honig and his staff will be dis-

tracted this summer, when California is scheduled to select its elementary and middle-school textbooks for the next 6 years. "With Honig tied up, and part of his staff tied up," says Scott, "there will be less energy for supporting the good books."

—Marcia Barinaga