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## NIH BUDGET

# Senate Panel Adds 16% To Complete Doubling

The last leg of the biomedical community's campaign to double the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over 5 years got a boost last week from a key Senate spending panel. The Senate Appropria-



**Well covered.** Senators Tom Harkin, at podium, and Arlen Specter celebrate with NIH top brass their proposed boost in the NIH budget.

tions Committee approved \$27.2 billion for NIH for the year beginning 1 October, a 16% increase over 2002 and twice the agency's 1998 level.

Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA), leaders of the subcommittee that oversees NIH's budget, celebrated the doubling victory a day earlier at a jubilant press conference. Joining them were new NIH chief Elias Zerhouni, his deputy Ruth Kirschstein, and six directors of the larger NIH institutes, who donned spanking new white lab coats with their names sewn on them for the occasion. "This is a red-letter day. It's a milestone," said Harkin.

The amount approved by the Senate panel is consistent with what President George W. Bush had proposed, but the panel didn't follow the Bush plan to the letter. Instead, it trimmed \$263 million from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)—which had been slated for a 57% boost, mainly thanks to \$1.5 billion for antibi-  
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terrorism research—and spread it around. That put many institutes that had been slated for 8.4% increases in the president's budget closer to 9%, a committee staffer says. "All these other problems—cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's—did not stop being problems on September 11," explained the aide. The bill gives NIAID a free hand in applying the cuts.

Although elated by the Senate mark, biomedical lobbyists note that the figure might be lower in the House, where the cor-

responding spending panel has a smaller overall total to work with. The House is expected to take up the spending bill in September after a monthlong recess; the two versions must then be reconciled.

—JOCELYN KAISER

## GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH

# Senate Puts the Heat On Science Nominees

A Senate panel turned a routine confirmation hearing last week into a withering, bipartisan assault on the Bush Administration's climate change policy. The targets—nominees for two senior White House science posts, one of whom would coordinate the Administration's research agenda on climate change—were left speechless and politically wounded by the criticism.

The unsuspecting victims were Kathie Olsen and Richard Russell, in line to be the principal deputies under John Marburger, the president's science adviser and head of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Olsen would handle science policy, including the Administration's \$1.7 billion global change research program, and Rus-

sell would coordinate technology policy. Russell holds a bachelor's degree in biology and spent 10 years as a House staffer before joining OSTP last year as chief of staff; Olsen, a Ph.D. neuroscientist, worked at the National Science Foundation for 15 years before becoming NASA's chief scientist in 1999.

Normally such hearings are innocuous affairs that showcase a nominee's expertise. But Senator John McCain (R-AZ), a ranking member, was already steamed about comments from Marburger to the same panel a week earlier in response to questions about the Administration's climate change policy. Stressing the uncertainties, Marburger had described how projections about global warming are based on assumptions of possible future levels of greenhouse gases; that should not be confused with predictions, he said, derived from known facts about current emissions. McCain, claiming that Marburger's testimony had "no credibility," offered Olsen and Russell a litmus test.

McCain first read a description of how "warming in the 21st century will be significantly larger than in the 20th century ... and temperatures in the U.S. will rise by about 5°–9°F (3°–5°C) on average in the next 100 years." Without identifying the source—a recent White House report\* that President George W. Bush has dismissed as mere speculation—McCain then asked each nominee whether he or she agreed with the statement.

Olsen and Russell initially refused to answer the question. Olsen, despite NASA's dominant role in the global change initiative, later said that she "was nervous ... [and] didn't understand the paragraph," adding that "I don't know if we have enough

\* [www.epa.gov/globalwarming/publications/car/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming/publications/car/index.html)



**Heated words.** White House nominees Richard Russell (left) and Kathie Olsen field sharp questions about climate change at Senate hearing.