

## HOMELAND SECURITY

# Congress Homes In on New Department's R&D Programs

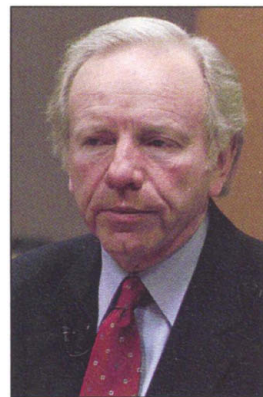
Science groups are feeling a little more secure about the role of research in the planned U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). After weeks of frenzied lobbying, advocates for various research organizations are assessing their efforts to shape the mammoth agency and preparing for a final push in September when Congress returns after a monthlong recess. Research groups have "done a good job of elevating science's role in the department," says April Burke of Lewis-Burke Associates, a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm that represents research universities and other science-related groups. "But we've got more work to do."

The proposed department, designed to shore up the nation's defenses against terrorism in the wake of last fall's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and

anthrax-laced letters, will be assembled largely from existing border-control and security programs. But it is also expected to start life next year with as much as a \$2 billion budget for science and technology.

The Senate's version of the department—approved by the Government Affairs Committee on 24 July—would create a \$200 million research agency designed to spur antiterrorism technologies. The House bill, approved on 26 July by the full body, would establish the Homeland Security Institute and several university- and government-based research centers (see below), although it doesn't set specific spending targets. Both bills also call

for DHS to take over selected nuclear non-proliferation and computer science programs currently run by the Department of Energy (DOE), an animal-pathogen laboratory run by the Department of Agriculture (USDA), and—if the White House requests it—certain DOE pathogen-research projects. "We may see some major new research programs" in the final bill, predicts George Leventhal, a



**Two to tango.** Rep. Dick Armey (R-TX) and Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) will lead congressional efforts to resolve differences over new department's science programs.

## Texas A&M Draws Flak for Plans to Nab Antiterrorism Research Center

Administrators at Texas A&M University have apparently decided that "homeland security" is a password to the federal treasury. Taking advantage of legislation now before Congress (see above) to create the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the College Station institution has positioned itself to snag a lucrative center to coordinate university-based research on antiterrorism technologies. But science advocates are crying foul, saying that other uni-



**Center of attention.** Texas A&M seeks federally funded research center.

versities should be able to compete for such a plum.

This summer Texas A&M officials worked with state politicians to insert language into the House version of the bill that sets out 15 criteria for awarding the center. Critics say that the criteria are designed to prevent competition. For example, schools must be affiliated with a Department of Agriculture "training center" and show "demonstrated expertise" in wastewater operations and port security. "Stanford doesn't do sewerage or train teamsters, so it's out," jokes one university lobbyist. "This has nothing to do with the nation's security needs and everything to do with one university's needs," says a House aide.

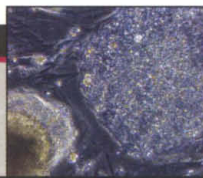
Texas A&M officials weren't available to comment, but campus sources say the language arises from a long-running campaign to establish the school as a hub of security expertise. In May, university regents voted to establish the Integrative Center for Homeland Security, and local Representative Kevin Brady (R-TX) proposed legislation that would allocate \$120 million over 5 years for it. That bill stalled, but House backers grafted it onto the DHS bill, surviving some testy debate and two close votes.

Opponents, including House science panel chief Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), say the language undermines the principle of awarding research funds competitively and restricts the applicant pool. But some schools say they can live with the rules. "We can compete," says Scott Sudduth, a Washington, D.C.-based lobbyist for the University of California system. Texas A&M, meanwhile, hopes to win over senators by assembling a statewide consortium of institutions to be charter members of such a center.

—D.M.

CREDITS: (LEFT TO RIGHT) DANNY LEHMAN/CORBIS; DAVE MARTIN/AP; STEVAN MORGAN/AP



Lessons from  
Amazonia's  
pastStem cell  
scarcityMalawi's case  
for HIV  
treatment

lobbyist for the Washington, D.C.-based Association of American Universities, which represents 61 top research institutions.

Exactly how those programs will be managed, however, is still up in the air. The initial proposal from the Bush Administration in June (*Science*, 14 June, p. 1944) would have rolled an array of government research programs into DHS. But the White House dropped some of its most controversial ideas—such as transferring DOE's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory—when it presented its formal plan to Congress. Since then, scientific organizations have made plenty of suggestions.

Biomedical research groups, for instance, oppose the Administration's proposal to give DHS control of the National Institutes of Health's (NIH's) \$1-billion-plus bioterrorism research portfolio, saying that it would hinder efforts to develop needed vaccines and drugs. "Adding a layer of bureaucracy isn't helpful if your goal is a better anthrax vaccine," says Pat White, a lobbyist for the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) in Washington, D.C. "An experienced science agency needs to be in charge," says Janet Shoemaker of the American Society for Microbiology (ASM), also in Washington.

The House agreed. A panel led by Representative Dick Armey (R-TX) shifted control of bioterror research back to NIH but gave DHS a strong advisory role. In contrast, the Senate bill, crafted by Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT), gives DHS the upper hand in setting spending priorities—

largely because the White House and some senators worry that NIH might stray from studies directly related to bioterror threats. "NIH sometimes can be too curiosity driven," says one Senate aide. ASM and FASEB are urging lawmakers to adopt the House version in the final measure.

The two bills also differ on which agency should regulate research involving potential bioweapons. The Senate bill calls for DHS to swallow two oversight programs being established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and USDA. But biomedical groups support the House approach, which leaves them where they are.

There is greater agreement among legislators on other issues. Both bills call for using merit-based competition to award grants and encourage the department to keep the fruits of its research unclassified. They also create advisory bodies to be stocked with outside scientists and add a high-level science czar to oversee the department's R&D portfolio. The new position "will help ensure that science has a seat at the policy-making table," says lobbyist Phillip Harman of Lewis-Burke, who pushed the idea on behalf of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena and other clients. Harman also pushed the \$200 million security research agency in Lieberman's bill, which is aimed at accelerating targeted technologies. Dubbed the Security Advanced Research Projects Agency, the agency is modeled on the Pentagon's DARPA.

Neither the House nor the Senate is eager to see the new department create its own centralized laboratory, something that the Administration had proposed bestowing upon Livermore. New Mexico politicians have criticized the idea, and both bills now require the department to give that state's national laboratories—Los Alamos and Sandia—a shot at becoming the lead lab. Lawmakers are also wary of the possible transfer of any of DOE's pathogen sequencing and research projects to DHS. Such politicking is sure to continue as Congress nears the finish line in a race for what some historians say is the most significant reorganization of the U.S. government since the Great Depression.

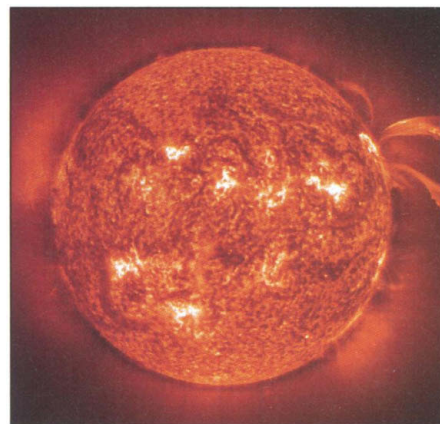
—DAVID MALAKOFF

## SOLAR PHYSICS

### Panel Shines Light On Exploring the Sun

NASA should revive plans to send a spacecraft into the solar atmosphere, concludes a National Academy of Sciences panel that this week unveiled the first-ever strategic plan for the next decade of solar and space physics. Its report recommends that NASA and other government agencies launch probes throughout the solar system to study the sun and its interaction with the planets and the interstellar medium.

The study—18 months in the making—offers a concrete set of priorities for solar research (see table). The panel's recommenda-



**Sizzling science.** Experts endorse canceled mission to the sun's atmosphere.

tions should help researchers obtain funding in a field that has traditionally lagged behind planetary exploration in the space sciences but that has enjoyed recent successes such as the U.S.-European SOHO mission (*Science*, 28 July 2000, p. 528).

By and large, the 15-member panel endorsed NASA's vision of a flotilla of spacecraft of various sizes, as well as a handful of ground-based efforts. But it urged the space agency to resurrect a \$650 million solar probe that will fly into the solar atmosphere to measure the sun's tumultuous plasmas, fields, and waves, despite technological and cost hurdles that include enduring temperatures of 2400 kelvin and an extra wallop of radiation. The panel, chaired by Lou Lanzerotti, a physicist at Lucent Technologies in Murray Hill, New Jersey, also puts a high priority on an as-yet-unfunded spacecraft,

#### HOMELAND SECURITY: TWO VIEWS

Issue	House	Senate
Who will manage bioterror research	NIH	DHS
Who will regulate bioterror agents	CDC, USDA	DHS
Tech research fund	No	Yes
Homeland Security Institute	Yes	No
University-based research centers	Yes	No
Science czar	Yes	Yes
Merit review for outside proposals	Yes	Yes
Limited classification	Yes	Yes
External advisers	Yes	Yes