

## POLICY

### NASA funding plan

Republicans in the US House of Representatives have drafted legislation that would cancel a proposed NASA asteroid-capture mission championed by President Barack Obama. On 19 June, Steven Palazzo (Republican, Mississippi) said that the mission “appears to be a costly and complex distraction”. The House plan, intended to guide NASA budgeting for the next two years, would replenish the space agency’s beleaguered planetary-science division, but would trim funding for climate-change research. The Democratic-controlled Senate is expected to offer its own plan for NASA soon.

### Living hybrids

A Japanese science advisory board has recommended relaxing national rules on making human–animal hybrid embryos, to allow *in vivo* experiments. The move came on 18 June, after scientists led by Hiromitsu Nakauchi at the University of Tokyo sought permission to inject human stem cells into pig embryos that lack pancreas-forming cells, to try to grow human organs in pigs. Nakauchi, who plans to open a lab at Stanford University in California in the next few months, says

### JOURNALISM AWARDS

Nature podcast editor and reporter Kerri Smith last week won the Association of British Science Writers’ best-feature award for ‘The Ground Breaker’ (*Nature* **489**, 22–25; 2012). Geoff Brumfiel won an award for one of his Fukushima stories (*Nature* **485**, 423–424; 2012); Declan Butler and Leigh Phillips were runners up.



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## Indonesian fires choke nearby countries

A thick haze engulfed areas of Singapore (pictured) and Malaysia last week as forest fires raged on the neighbouring Indonesian island of Sumatra. On 23 June, Malaysia declared a state of emergency in the districts of Muar and Ledang in Johor state. On 20 June, the Singaporean environmental ministry reported a Pollutant Standards Index reading of 371; levels above 300

are deemed hazardous to health. Singaporean officials met representatives of Indonesia last week to urge the country to step up its efforts to stop the fires. Singapore also offered its assistance, including a cloud-seeding aircraft and high-resolution satellite images. Some Indonesian reports suggest that the fires were caused by companies illegally clearing forests.

that he may conduct some experiments outside Japan if the government is slow to adopt the recommendations.

### Hepatitis C testing

A panel of health experts assembled by the US government has upgraded its support for hepatitis C screening in all individuals born between 1945 and 1965. The new endorsement, announced on 24 June, increases the likelihood that insurers will cover screening costs and that physicians will perform the tests. US health experts estimate that screening this high-risk population could identify more than 800,000 new cases of the infection, which causes liver disease and cancer. See [go.nature.com/akirvr](http://go.nature.com/akirvr) for more.

## RESEARCH

### Gender imbalance

Female evolutionary biologists may enjoy a smaller level of professional exposure compared with their male colleagues, in part because they give fewer conference talks, according to analysis published on 20 June (J. Schroeder *et al.* *J. Evol. Biol.* <http://doi.org/m2w>; 2013). At the 2011 Congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology, women accounted for 23% of the invitations to speak — similar to their representation among senior scientists and those who publish in high-profile journals. However, only 15% of actual conference speakers were women. Female scientists were about twice as

likely as men to turn down the speaking invitations. See *Nature* **495**, 22–24 (2013).

### Impact-factor list

The latest journal impact-factor rankings were released on 19 June by Thomson Reuters, an information firm based in New York. A record 66 publications were banned from this year’s report for excessively citing their own articles or those of particular journals. In May, a group of researchers, scientific organizations and publishers criticized the use of impact factors to judge publications and individual scientists, issuing a pledge to “reduce emphasis on the journal impact factor as a promotional tool”. See [go.nature.com/ufgbrn](http://go.nature.com/ufgbrn) for more.

## PEOPLE

**Nobel physicist dies**

Theoretical physicist Kenneth Wilson died on 15 June aged 77, reported Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, last week. While at Cornell, Wilson won the 1982 Nobel Prize in Physics for his theories describing the behaviour of matter at critical points in phase transitions, such as the shift between a liquid and a gas. As an advocate of science education, he also helped to establish the Physics Education Research Group at Ohio State University in Columbus, where he worked from 1988 until retiring in 2008.

**Guilty plea**

A former scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico, and his wife, pleaded guilty to federal charges involving the release of classified nuclear-weapons data, the US Department of Justice said on 21 June. Physicist Pedro Leonardo Mascheroni, who worked at LANL from 1979 to 1988, admitted that he shared restricted data in 2008 and 2009 with a person he believed was a Venezuelan government official. His wife, Roxby Mascheroni, who did technical writing and editing at LANL, admitted to conspiring to convey the information.

**The right stuff**

NASA announced its selections for a new class of candidate astronauts last week, the first since 2009. With four men and four women chosen, the group set an agency record for the highest percentage of female candidates. Among those picked is Jessica Meir (pictured), assistant professor of anaesthesia at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. The candidates will begin training in August at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.

**Fermilab head**

On 20 June, the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) in Batavia, Illinois, announced physicist Nigel Lockyer as its next director. Lockyer currently leads TRIUMF, Canada's national laboratory for particle and nuclear physics in Vancouver. He says that he will focus

on getting international collaboration on a large, deep detector for Fermilab's planned Long-Baseline Neutrino Experiment, and on gathering support to build the International Linear Collider to study the Higgs boson. He is due to take up his post on 3 September. See [go.nature.com/jp3iku](http://go.nature.com/jp3iku) for more.

## EVENTS

**Magnet on the move**

On 22 June, a 15-metre-wide electromagnet began a 5,000-kilometre trip by truck and boat from Brookhaven National Laboratory in Upton, New York, to the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory in Batavia, Illinois. Heavy rain and wind had postponed the original departure date of 16 June. The magnet is destined for use in the Muon  $g-2$  experiment, which will study how short-lived particles called muons behave in magnetic fields.

## BUSINESS

**Cheap drugs faster**

US pharmaceutical companies will now find it harder to pay the makers of generic drugs to delay releasing cheaper versions of brand-name compounds. In a 5:3 decision, the US Supreme Court sided last week with the Federal Trade Commission

## COMING UP

**30 JUNE–3 JULY**

Kuala Lumpur hosts the 7th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention. Highlights include cure strategies and prenatal care. [go.nature.com/3zciw](http://go.nature.com/3zciw)

**1–2 JULY**

The Basel Declaration Society holds a meeting on transparency in animal research in London, where topics include how to communicate the need for studies on higher mammals. [go.nature.com/n7qwsx](http://go.nature.com/n7qwsx)

in determining that such 'pay-to-delay' practices can violate antitrust regulations. Two days later, the European Commission fined drug company Lundbeck, headquartered in Copenhagen, and several generics makers for delaying release of the generic form of the antidepressant drug citalopram.

**AstraZeneca site**

The Cambridge Biomedical Campus in the United Kingdom will host a new £330-million (US\$509-million) research and development centre and corporate headquarters for drug giant AstraZeneca, currently based in London. The company announced its selected site on 18 June, and says that it expects to have 2,000 staff at the purpose-built facility by 2016. In March, the company said that it would consolidate various teams at the new hub, including those involved in research on small molecules and biological products, with several hundred jobs being shed in the process.

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## TREND WATCH

The prevalence of certain strains of human papillomavirus (HPV) among US girls aged 14–19 has more than halved since the introduction of a vaccine, says a study (L. E. Markowitz *et al.* *J. Infect. Dis.* <http://doi.org/m2v>; 2013). The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, added vaccination against four types of HPV to the routine schedule for girls in 2006. Researchers report that the average prevalence of those strains fell from 11.5% in 2003–06 to 5.1% in 2007–10.

**US MAKES HEADWAY AGAINST HPV**

A US vaccine targeting strains of human papillomavirus (HPV) has cut prevalence of those strains in 14–19-year-old girls.

