Congress to vote on open access and NIH funds

US investigators funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) may soon be compelled to publish only in journals that make their research papers freely available within one year of publication.

Congress is this week expected to take final votes on a bill incorporating this directive. The measure is contained in a spending bill that boosts the biomedical agency's effective budget by 3.1%, to $29.8 billion in 2008.

President George W. Bush has vowed to veto the bill, which will fund the Department of Health and Human Services and other agencies, because it includes what he calls "irresponsible and excessive" levels of spending.

But congressional Democrats have attached to the measure an unrelated but politically popular bill funding the Department of Veterans Affairs. They hope that this will generate the two-thirds support needed in both houses of Congress to override a presidential veto.

The open-access requirement in the bill would apply only during fiscal year 2008; it would need to be renewed in yearly spending bills in the future.

Argo system makes a splash with final float

A global network of floats gauging the vital signs of the world's oceans was completed last week, with the launch of the 3,000th device.

Buoy-like floats in the Argo project periodically dive to depths of 2,000 metres, where they drift for 10 days recording temperatures, salinity and current velocity, and then surface — sending the data to a satellite for transmission to a central repository (see *Nature* 415, 954–955; 2002). More than 30 nations in the Argo system will use the data to create ocean profiles, which then will be monitored for changes over time.

Floating vote: crew onboard the *Kaharoa* deploy the 3,000th device in the Argo network.

SCRIPPS INST. OCEANOGRAPHY/UNIV. CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Eight years after deployments began, the New Zealand research vessel *Kaharoa* on 1 November dropped what were designated as the final floats at latitude 45° south in the southern Pacific Ocean.

Biomedical agency puts epigenetics on the map

The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) is set to roll out the latest highway on its 'roadmap for medical research' (see *Nature* 448, 406–407; 2007). It is seeking project proposals worth $191 million in epigenetics.

The agency already spends about $240 million per year on epigenetics, the study of stable, inherited genetic modifications that affect gene expression and function without altering the DNA sequence.

Several projects will be funded in the push. These include the development of 'reference' epigenomic maps; studies

Factory delay leaves flamingos in the pink

C. RATIER/NHPA

The lesser flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*) of Tanzania's Lake Natron (pictured) may get a temporary reprieve from a US$400-million soda-ash plant that was to have been built nearby. An environmental advisory committee has recommended the government block the factory's construction unless its Indian-Tanzanian developer provides more details of plans to protect the local ecosystem.

Environmentalists are up in arms over the factory because the lake is a major breeding ground for East Africa's roughly 2 million lesser flamingos and also home to a number of rare species, says Lota Melamari, chief executive of the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania.

Melamari, who served on the advisory panel, says developers presented few details about how the plant would affect the lake ecosystem. "The main concern was a lack of information," he says. The government is now deciding how to handle the proposal.