

## RESEARCH FUNDING

**JUGGLING THE FEDERAL BUDGET AX**

IMAGE  
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REASONS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Congress and the administration moved the annual budget battle to the research-funding front at the end of March and beginning of April. Legislators fought to reinstate fiscal year 1985 allocations targeted for rescission by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), while the administration threatened to veto any attempts to re-inflate the budget. At the same time, appropriations committees in the House and the Senate examined the administration's plans for research spending in fiscal 1986.

At the end of March, the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on environment and health voted out a bill that would restore 1,526 competitive grants to the National Institutes of Health's fiscal year 1985 budget. OMB had ordered NIH to reduce the number of its new competitive grant awards from 6,526 to an even 5,000. Rather than attempt to impound the money, the administration had directed NIH to commit current budget allocations to funding research projects through 1986 and 1987. If the administration planned to continue this policy through succeeding years, the result would have been a "wash," a fundamental change in structure (assuring researchers of continued support); such, apparently, was not OMB's intent, so the actual effect would be to move current appropriations into succeeding years. With 168 co-sponsors, the reinstatement bill has a good

chance of clearing the legislature. It also stands a good chance of being vetoed by President Reagan. Whether Congress could or would override that veto is unclear.

Meanwhile, a Senate subcommittee challenged the legality of OMB's action, and gave NIH's director until after the Easter recess to make the uncomfortable choice between following the administration's instructions and following the comptroller general's opinion that such "forward funding" is "unlawful."

All told, the NIH's research funds would drop some \$399 million from the \$4.11 billion originally allocated for research in 1985. (The predicted outlay for 1986 is \$4.35 billion.) Not all of this is due to OMB. Congress's own budget-cutting legislation and the natural lag of payments account for much of the difference.

OMB estimates that the National Cancer Institute will spend \$1.064 billion to support research in fiscal 1985, some \$88 million less than originally authorized. NCI's fiscal 1986 spending would be \$1.135 billion.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' 1985 research spending would fall from an authorized \$358 million to an actual \$320 million. In 1986, the NIAID would spend \$345 million, under the administration plan.

NIH's research budget is not the only one in decline. While overall operating budgets in key areas for biotechnology (see figures) are grow-

ing, cutbacks do seem to be eating into the portion spent on research.

The OMB sees the Centers for Disease Control spending \$60.8 million on research, rather than the \$65.8 million originally authorized for '85. The 1986 estimate is \$64.2 million, *higher* than the \$57.6 million originally allocated.

The Environmental Protection Agency's research and development programs have seen some cuts. EPA was originally authorized to spend \$188 million on all forms of research in 1985. The administration's revised estimates call for spending \$163 million, increasing to \$191 million in 1986 (down from the \$212 million authorized for that year). These research funds are divided between energy-supply research (\$43.2 million in estimated 1985 outlays) and pollution control and abatement research (\$120.6 million in estimated 1985 outlays).

The cuts in current allocations for agricultural research have not been as deep. Of some \$490 million originally authorized for 1985, OMB estimates that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Research Service should spend some \$484 million, though the estimated total outlay for 1986 dips to \$477 million.

The administration has scheduled still smaller cuts in the Food and Drug Administration's 1985 spending, originally authorized at \$407 million and now projected at \$404 million.

—Douglas McCormick