



SUNY Federal Relations Update Monday, April 21, 2008

With Earth Day upon us tomorrow, I thought it appropriate to mention the "2008 New Energy Symposium." New Energy New York and the Energy & Environmental Technology Applications Center (E2TAC) at the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering at the University at Albany are hosting the Third Annual New Energy Symposium July 9-10, 2008, attracting prominent players in the energy field from the academia, government, and industry sectors. Information about the symposium is attached and can also be found here: <http://www.neny.org/nes/2008/home>.

Congress this week continues to work on a Fiscal Year 2008 supplemental appropriations bill. Leaders in both houses say they will add funding for domestic programs to their bills, despite the White House's threat to veto any supplemental bill that funds anything other than the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 240 leading business, education, and scientific organizations, including SUNY, signed on to letters sent to the President and congressional leaders on April 16 urging them to add funding to the FY08 supplemental appropriations bill for scientific research and science and mathematics education. The supplemental funding bill is tentatively scheduled for markup in the House Appropriations Committee this week. The letters were spearheaded by Tapping America's Potential (TAP), a coalition of 16 business organizations, and the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation, a coalition of business, scientific, and education organizations. This and related efforts were sparked by the failure of Congress and the President last year to provide significant funding increases for key research and education programs at the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, despite strong bipartisan support to do so. The letters can be found here: <http://www.tap2015.org/>

Please see below for more on:

- **HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO INCREASE STUDENT LOAN BORROWING LIMITS**
- **HOUSE PASSES FARM BILL EXTENSION**
- **SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AWARDED \$1.6M GRANT**
- **DOE OFFICE OF SCIENCE ANNOUNCES NEW ENERGY RESEARCH CENTERS PROGRAM**
- **ORGANIZATIONS URGE SUPPLEMENTAL FY08 FUNDING FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND EDUCATION**
- **PROTESTS EXPECTED DURING WORLD LAB ANIMAL LIBERATION WEEK**
- **WORK CONTINUES ON SENATE PATENT REFORM BILL**
- **DEFENSE DEPARTMENT MAY EXPAND FUNDED RESEARCH FIELDS**

HOUSE APPROVES BILL TO INCREASE STUDENT LOAN BORROWING LIMITS

On Thursday, April 17, the House approved, by a vote of 383 to 27, legislation aimed at ensuring that students and families have access to student loans despite the turmoil in national credit markets. The Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008 (H.R.

5715) would increase borrowing limits for federal graduate and undergraduate loans and allow the Department of Education to buy student loans from private lenders, freeing up capital for them to make additional loans.

The House approved an amendment by Reps. Mike Castle (R-DE) and Peter Welch (D-VT) that requires the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the impact of raising borrowing limits on tuition, fees, and room and board, as well as on private loan borrowing.

The measure is similar to a bill (S. 2815) introduced in the Senate on April 3 by Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA). CongressDaily reports that Senator Kennedy hopes to have the Senate consider the bill soon. The House bill would increase annual loan limits for dependent and independent undergraduates by \$2,000. For dependent students, the limits would be increased to \$5,500 for first-year students, \$6,500 for second year students, and \$7,500 annually for the final two years. Additionally, the bill would increase the aggregate borrowing limits (for both subsidized and unsubsidized loans) from \$23,000 to \$31,000 for dependent undergraduates and from \$46,000 to \$57,500 for independent undergraduates. For graduate students, H.R. 5715 would increase the annual borrowing limit for unsubsidized loans from \$12,000 to \$14,000.

The bill also would make other changes to federal student loan programs. For example, it would give parent borrowers participating in the PLUS program the option to defer repayment up to six months after their children leave college. Additionally, the bill would authorize the Secretary of Education to buy student loans from lenders, freeing up funds for lenders to use in making new loans. The manager's amendment offered by House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller (D-CA) requires the Department to involve officials from the Treasury Department and the Office of Management and Budget in the decision-making process, to ensure that the federal government incurs no costs in the loan purchases.

A fact sheet about the bill is available on the House Education and Labor Committee Web site at: <http://edlabor.house.gov/micro/loansact.shtml>.

HOUSE PASSES FARM BILL EXTENSION

On April 16, the House passed a one week extension of the Farm Bill, until Friday, April 25 to allow House and Senate conferees more time to negotiate the bill. It is expected that at least one more extension will be necessary before the conferees complete their work.

SUFFOLK COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AWARDED \$1.6M GRANT

Last month, Suffolk County Community College won a competitive grant of \$1,668,270 under the U.S. Department of Labor's Community Based Job Training Grant Competition for its Advanced Manufacturing initiative. According to the Department of Labor, almost 400 applicants were considered for only 69 grants under the President's Community-Based Job Training Grants Initiative. The initiative is designed to improve the ability of colleges to provide their regions' workers with the skills needed to enter growing industries in their hometowns. I mentioned Morrisville's award two weeks ago, but failed to mention Suffolk's award. Morrisville State College and Suffolk Community College were the only two NYS awardees in this competition.

DOE OFFICE OF SCIENCE ANNOUNCES NEW ENERGY RESEARCH CENTERS PROGRAM

The Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science is seeking proposals for Energy Frontier Research Centers under a new [program](#) aimed at speeding scientific breakthroughs needed for advanced energy technologies. Awards for this first group of centers are likely to be in the range of \$2–5 million a year for an initial five-year period. About \$100 million will be available for the new centers program in FY09. The competition is open to universities, DOE laboratories, and other institutions.

PROTESTS EXPECTED DURING WORLD LAB ANIMAL LIBERATION WEEK

World Lab Animal Liberation Week (WLALW), also known as World Week for Animals in Laboratories, begins April 19 and extends until April 26, with events protesting animal use in research scheduled for several states across the country. The National Association for Biomedical Research and the Association of American Medical Colleges have issued security notices regarding events and alerted many researchers and university administrators about these activities. Institutions may wish to increase campus and lab security during this week. For more information on the planned protests and other events, see http://wwail.org/list_event.html and <http://www.all-creatures.org/wlalw/events-participants-2008.html>.

Past WLALWs have included rallies, protests, news conferences, literature tables, and other events at various locations associated with animal research. Given the recent escalation in violent attacks on academic researchers who use animal models, increased attention to institutional security, especially at animal housing and laboratory facilities, would appear to be prudent.

Lists of publicized events are available [here](#) and [here](#).

WORK CONTINUES ON SENATE PATENT REFORM BILL

Leaders of the Senate Judiciary Committee continue to consider changes to the committee-passed patent reform bill (S. 1145) in an effort to gain the widest possible support before taking the measure to the Senate floor. Committee staff is working to develop compromises on several issues that would be incorporated into a manager's amendment. Although reports over the past few weeks have indicated that such an amendment was close to being introduced, thorny issues remain and work continues.

An indication of the difficulty of the discussions came on April 9 when Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), ranking member of the committee, said publicly that he could not support some of the new language proposed by Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT), principally on the issue of damages for patent infringement suits. Mr. Specter told CQToday, "I am hopeful that we can reach an agreement, but more work has to be done to get it right."

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT MAY EXPAND FUNDED RESEARCH FIELDS

In a speech to the Association of American Universities (AAU) on Monday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced plans to significantly expand the types of research funded by the Defense Department. This major initiative, the "Minerva Consortia," would focus on areas such as: Chinese Military and Technology Studies, Iraqi and Terrorist Perspectives Projects, Religious and Ideological Studies, and a New Disciplines Project (potentially engaging fields ranging from history to evolutionary psychology). He stated that the key principle of the consortia would be "complete openness and rigid adherence to academic freedom and integrity." He also referenced the long history of cooperation between academia and the military and proposed that the two continue to work together, especially regarding veterans'

educational opportunities. Secy. Gates' address is available at:
www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1228

Compiled by Beth Kempter & Liz Clark