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Prepared by Mark Shafer, Oklahoma Climatological Survey

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Monthly News Review is prepared by the Oklahoma Climatological Survey. Its purpose is to provide a summary of weather and climate news or related issues that may help guide policy-makers in the Oklahoma Weather Center. Along with weather, climate, environmental, and science issues, the review includes issues on the national and state agendas and events that affect major businesses in Oklahoma that bear some relation to demands for weather-related information. The summaries and any opinions expressed herein are those of the author, and in no way reflect positions of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey or the University of Oklahoma.

NATIONAL

CBO increases budget shortfall projections (Oklahoman/AP 2/28/2004) – A new Congressional Budget Office projection estimates budget deficits will total \$2.75 trillion over the next decade. This compares to a projection of a \$5.6 trillion surplus over a ten-year period just two years ago. The CBO projection is the first in this budget cycle to project the customary ten years. The White House estimate projected only the next five years, arguing that longer-range projections were just guesswork. Democrats countered that many of the costs of the present economic policies will be borne in later years, as baby boomers begin to retire.

Republicans worry about deficit (USA Today 1/15/2004) – The House Republican Study Committee, a group of 90 House Republicans, are discussing ways to curb “excessive government spending.” A growing group of fiscal conservatives are worried about increasing budget deficits. Evidence of the concern is highlighted in recent rejections of new initiatives, including a manned mission to Mars. Representative Gil Gutknecht (R-MN), vice chair of the House Science Committee and a member of the Budget Committee, said “the seeds are there for a budget revolt.” During the last two years, federal spending has grown 16% overall, the biggest two-year increase in a decade. Discretionary spending, including Defense and Homeland Security, has grown by 26% in the period. Even though the White House claims it has pushed for restraint in other areas, eight of the 14 cabinet departments have seen spending increases of more than 20% during the Bush administration, led by a 60% increase in the Department of Education’s budget. Total Federal spending, as a percentage of the GDP, declined from about 22% in the early 1990s to about 18% at the beginning of President Bush’s term. In 2003, the spending stood at 20.2%. Others outside of Washington are expressing concerns as well. The International Monetary Fund, which typically censures budget policies of debt-laden third-world nations, warned that U.S. budget deficits risked destabilizing financial markets and stunting global investment and economic growth.

House approves pay parity (Government Executive 3/31/2004) – The House of Representatives endorsed equal civilian and military pay raises for FY05 in a “Sense of the Congress” resolution. The President’s FY05 budget called for a 3.5% pay increase for military personnel and 1.5% increase for civilian personnel. Despite opposition from the President and several Republican legislators, led by Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK), the resolution passed 299-126. The resolution was sponsored by House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA), who argued that “you don’t get top talent on the cheap.”

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/033104d1.htm>

Science committee argues for full NIST funding (Government Executive 3/31/2004) – House Science Committee members Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY; chairman) and Vernon Ehlers (R-MI) urged appropriations colleagues to fully-fund the requested \$422.8 million budgeted for the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The amount would restore cuts made last year. Boehlert and Ehlers voiced concerns of layoffs of up to 100 scientists and impacts on work on voting technology standards.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/033104tdpm2.htm>

NOAA FY05 budget request 8% lower (NASULGC February 2004) – The Fiscal Year 2005 budget request for NOAA is 8.1% lower than the FY2004 level. The \$300 million decline comes largely from the National Ocean Service, whose budget would be cut by 35%. All areas except the National Weather Service, which would see a \$20 million increase from its \$730 million appropriation, would be reduced. Meanwhile, the National Science Foundation would receive a 3% increase, with a tremendous boost to the Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction budget. The EPA would be cut by 7.2% overall, with an 11.4% decrease in its Science and Technology budget and a 35% cut to its Science to Achieve Results program. The USGS budget would decline slightly overall, and includes zeroing the budget for Water Institutes and a slight decline in Hydrologic Monitoring and Research. USDA research would receive a small increase in its base programs and competitive grants, but would be cut by 62 to 82 percent in its Special Grants and Other Research categories (areas often added in by Congress, but not requested much in the Administration’s budget). Extension is virtually unchanged in the request for its base programs, with a 4% overall decrease in total Extension activities.

<http://www.nasulgc.org/Whatsnew/newsline.asp>

Senator holds EPA nominations (Government Executive 4/8/2004) – Senator James Jeffords (I-VT), ranking member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, has placed a hold on four EPA nominees. Jeffords claims the EPA has failed to provide him documents, citing 12 unmet requests since May 2001. Last month, committee chairman James Inhofe (R-OK), joined Jeffords in writing to EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt stating the EPA had an obligation to provide the requested documents. The nominees on hold are for deputy administrator, general counsel, chief financial officer, and assistant administrator for the Office of Water.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/040804cdam1.htm>

Republicans expected to retain House (Oklahoman/AP 3/22/2004) – Democrats are expected to fall short of the 12 seats they need to regain control of the U.S. House of Representatives this fall, according to strategists from both parties. Only 36 of the 435 seats are considered competitive. In addition, the Republican Congressional Committee has an \$11 million to \$7 million edge over their Democratic counterparts. However, Democrats could gain some seats; more first-term lawmakers – those considered most vulnerable – are held by Republicans.

Greenspan grasps ‘third rail’ (Oklahoman/AP 2/26/2004) – Social Security is often called the ‘third rail’ of politics, because trying to change benefits can kill a political career. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan decided to take that risk. Greenspan warned Congress that unless soaring budget deficits from out-of-control entitlement programs are addressed, the economy could face “very debilitating” rises in interest rates in coming years. The government has promised more in entitlement benefits, including Medicare, than it can afford to pay, according to Greenspan. He also echoed earlier comments, that tax cuts should be offset by spending cuts, so as not to worsen the budget deficit. Greenspan’s comments were rejected by leading Democrats, arguing that President Bush’s tax cut policies are the source of deficits. Republicans, likewise, distanced themselves from the Chairman’s comments.

GDP sign of economic recovery (Oklahoman/AP 3/26/2004) – The economy grew at a rate of 4.1% in the last quarter of 2003, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Although down from a near-record 8.2% growth in the third quarter, economists remain optimistic about continued prospects for economic growth. Analysts expect growth to remain above four percent for the first two quarters of 2004, with improvement in job markets as well.

Unfunded mandates top \$29 billion (Oklahoman/AP 3/11/2004) – States will need to ante up \$29 billion over the coming year for funding for programs initiated by Washington but not fully funded. Programs include special education programs and the No Child Left Behind initiative (\$10 billion each), prescription drug programs (\$6 billion), and Help America Vote (\$2.4 billion). Proponents of these programs argue, however, that the programs are voluntary and that states are not required to provide funding. After efforts to end unfunded mandates in 1995, requirements attached to federal grants, loopholes, and exemptions to the law have slipped back in. Officials with the National Conference of State Legislatures argue that although such programs are technically voluntary, reality is that states cannot refuse to participate. [Note: *The Daily Ardmoreite* quotes an NCSL study showing Oklahoma annually spends 6.4% of its budget, or about \$267 million, on unfunded mandates; see story from 4/11/2004 on the Ardmoreite's website: http://www.ardmoreite.com/stories/041104/new_unfunded.shtml.]

Governors discuss issues (Oklahoman/AP 2/22/2004) – Governors met in Washington, D.C. for their annual meeting, hoping to achieve some consensus on major issues facing the states. Among concerns cited were education, health care, roads, and other policy issues. Republicans wanted more flexibility in programs, while Democrats wanted sweeping changes and increased federal funding. It is unlikely that consensus will be reached, however, given the divided nature of the electorate and a presidential election year.

All-Hazards planning may move out of FEMA (Government Executive 2/27/2004) – All-hazards planning may be moved out of FEMA into a new Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness. The move would focus FEMA more on the disaster response aspects and integrate hazards with terrorism preparedness in other areas of Homeland Security. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/022704tdpm1.htm>

Legislators press for homeland security standards (Government Executive 3/18/2004) – Members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security questioned Suzanne Mencer, director of domestic preparedness, regarding the “minimum essential capabilities” that should be expected when grants are awarded. Committee Chairman Hall Rogers (R-KY) said that if DHS does not write the standards, the committee will withhold funding from the department and write the standards. In a heated exchange, Mencer asked “When would you like it?” to which Rogers replied “Today.” In addition to concerns about awarding grants without standards in place, lawmakers expressed frustration over the level of assistance to state and local governments, how that funding is distributed, and reimbursement costs when the nation’s threat level is raised. Representative Marion Berry (D-AR) stated: “I think there should be a massive wake-up call in the whole Department of Homeland Security.” <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/031804c1.htm>

Homeland Security unveils management plan for first responders (Government Executive 3/1/2004) – Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge unveiled the National Incident Management System (NIMS), designed to provide a “unified command center for state, local and federal” entities. NIMS sets standardized guidelines for localities to follow when responding to emergencies. Localities will have until October 1 to comply with the guidelines in order to receive homeland security grants. In addition to standardized templates, the system requires communities to develop ongoing preparedness plans. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/030104tdpm1.htm>

Homeland Security seeks to improve funding formula (Government Executive 2/25/2004) – In response to claims that homeland security funding is insufficient to equip and train first responders and protect critical infrastructure, officials at the Homeland Security Department stated they are searching for better ways to distribute funding. Officials believe that a population-based method should be used in providing funding, but supplemental funding could be used for additional criteria, such as threat assessments, population density, and critical infrastructure.
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/022504c1.htm>

Senate holds drought hearing (U.S. Senate 3/9/2004) – The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held an oversight hearing on water supply issues in the arid west. Testimony was given by Bennet W. Raley, Assistant Secretary, Water and Science, Department of Interior; Floyd Gaibler, Deputy Undersecretary, Farm and Foreign Ag Services, USDA; William T. Grisoli, Commander and Division Engineer, NW Division, US Army Corps of Engineers; Louis Uccellini, Director, National Center for Environmental Prediction, NWS; Craig Bell, Executive Director, Western States Water Council; and Tex Hall, President, National Congress of American Indians Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Tribal Chairman. Testimony is posted on the NOAA website, <http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/mar04/noaa04-031.html>.

Technology executives feel recession behind them (USA Today 1/16/2004) – Upbeat earnings at the end of 2003 lead several executives of technology companies to breathe a collective sigh of relief, feeling the downturn is behind them. After a nearly three-year downturn, businesses and consumers are again purchasing computers, networking equipment, and technology services. The spending is nowhere near that of the late 1990s, but the upward trend has analysts hopeful. Because of cuts during the last three years, the increased revenues for the companies are going directly into profits. John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, said “CEOs are taking their foot off the brake, and its heading toward the gas pedal.” The growth is not uniform, however. Upstart companies offering web-based corporate software are doing well, while companies that sell huge corporate software packages are still lagging.

Natural gas prices decline (Oklahoman 3/4/2004) – Natural gas prices dipped again in early March, marking two consecutive months of decline in what is typically the period of greatest demand. Gas prices fell to \$4.67 for March, down from a peak of \$5.65 in January. Economists are split on reasons behind the price decline. Factors cited include increased use of long-term contracts by utilities, which lends stability to markets, and sufficient reserves to make it through the winter. Last year, withdrawals decreased reserves to 600 billion cubic feet, believed to be near the lower limit to assure sufficient pressure to withdraw gas. This year, despite widespread and extended periods of cold weather, the reserves remained at about 1 trillion cubic feet. Storage capacity is 3.2 trillion cubic feet. Although the economists differ on causes, they all expect natural gas prices to remain within a range of \$4 to \$6 throughout the year, with some increases in summer due to demand by utilities for electricity production.

Energy companies revise estimates (Oklahoman/AP 3/21/32004) – Several large energy companies have shifted portions of their reserves from ‘proven’ to ‘unproven’ reserves, some by more than 40 percent. The changes are due, in part, to market forces. As prices decline, deeper wells or more challenging extractions become unprofitable, causing companies to shift reserves to the unproven category. The Securities and Exchange Commission requires companies to disclose their proven oil and gas estimates at the end of each year.

AGENCY NEWS

NOAA hosts stakeholder forum (NOAA 3/29/2004) – NOAA will host a national stakeholder forum on April 16 in Washington, D.C. Input from the forum, *Moving NOAA into the 21st Century*, will be used in revising NOAA's strategic plan. The forum will feature facilitated breakout sessions organized around NOAA's four mission goals and cross-cutting themes. Results will be posted on the NOAA publicaffairs website, and comments may be submitted.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/mar04/noaa04-031.html>

NOAA outlines major accomplishments (NOAA 3/15/2004) – NOAA released a list of what it considers its major achievements for 2003. Included in the list are participation in the Climate Change Science Strategic Plan and its role in the Earth Observation Summit. NWS accomplishments included expansion of NOAA weather radio, handling the May 4-10,2003 tornado outbreak, hurricane advisories and winter storm forecasts, and improved predictability.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/mar04/noaa04-026.html>

New directors for NWS, WMO (UCAR Quarterly Winter 2003-04) – Retired Brigadier General David Johnson was sworn in as head of the NWS in January, following a 30-year career in the military. Johnson was previously director of weather for the Air Force and had served as an adviser in the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS). Johnson holds a bachelor's degree in geography from the University of Kansas and a master's degree in human relations from Webster University. Also in January, Michael Jarraud took the helm of the World Meteorological Organization, becoming its fifth secretary-general. Jarraud, a French meteorologist, served as deputy secretary-general for the past eight years, and spent 17 years at the ECMWF. Jarraud has called for stronger multidisciplinary links to maximize the benefit of weather, climate, and water forecasts and warnings.

<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/quarterly/winter04/wmo.html>

Kerry would cut contractors (Government Executive 4/7/2004) – Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said that his administration would cut 100,000 federal contractor jobs and freeze agency travel spending, to combat the “fiscal cancer” of the growing budget deficit. Paul Weinstein, as senior fellow with the Progressive Policy Institute (http://www.ppionline.org/documents/deficit_plan_0104.pdf) estimated that eliminating 150,000 federal consultants could save \$67 billion over ten years. Federal contractor groups said the issue is the government's mission, not the size of the contractor workforce, arguing that those contract workers would be replaced with new government employees. Kerry did not endorse Weinstein's call for a ten percent cut in the federal workforce at all agencies except Defense and Homeland Security.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/040704ts1.htm>

OMB should revise evaluation (Government Executive 2/5/2004) – Panelists at a House Government Reform subcommittee hearing said that rather than randomly sampling federal programs each year, OMB should look at common goals and compare programs that share those goals. OMB reviewed 40 percent of federal programs using the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), a questionnaire consisting of 25 to 30 questions. OMB plans to evaluate 20% of randomly-selected programs in each budget cycle. Paul Posner, managing director of federal budget issues at GAO, suggested that OMB should target programs in high-priority areas, so that comparisons between programs can be made more easily.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/020504a1.htm>

Appropriators skeptical of performance budgets (Government Executive 1/13/2004) – During the 2004 budget cycle, legislators acknowledged the performance-based budgets that OMB required agencies to submit, but they still wanted to see traditional budget justifications. Legislators view performance-based budget documents as strategic planning tools for agency managers, but these should only be submitted as supplements to, rather in place of, traditional funding requests. In the conference report on the 2004 omnibus spending package, legislators “strongly disagreed” with substitutions. In addition to difficulties integrating such budgets into the process, some congressional staff members questioned the “credibility and objectivity” of information contained in performance-based budget materials.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/011304a1.htm>

GPRA Amendment would require plan updates (Government Executive 3/15/2004) – An amendment to the Government Performance and Results Act would require agencies to conduct evaluations of all federal programs at least every five years and revise strategic plans every four years, following the presidential election cycle. The “Program Assessments and Results Act”, introduced by Rep. Todd Platts (R-PA) is based on recommendations by GAO after a 10-year review of GPRA.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/031504a1a.htm>

Data-sharing standards (Government Executive 3/29/2004) – The Regional Alliance for Infrastructure and Network Security (RAINS) has unveiled an “open format” system designed to facilitate sharing information among federal agencies, state officials, and private vendors. The effort includes over 30 high-tech vendors and public agencies, including Hewlett-Packard, Intel and PeopleSoft.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/032904td1.htm>

Exchange program for IT managers (Government Executive 1/15/2004) – The Office of Personnel Management proposed a new rule that will allow career IT managers at federal agencies to accept temporary assignments, from 3 months to one year, at private companies. The program, called the “Information Technology Exchange” is intended to address shortages of federal IT project managers and to provide additional skills and training to the federal workforce. This allows more flexibility to agencies to address critical short-term information technology needs and foster innovation and creativity, according to David McClure, vice president of e-government at the Council for Excellence in Government. The program would be open to federal managers with “exceptional” performance records in GS-11 or higher positions.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/011504a1>.

Advocacy groups criticize Corps practices (Government Executive 3/19/2004) – The National Wildlife Federation and Taxpayers for Common Sense claim the Corps of Engineers needs new procedures for approving, prioritizing, and monitoring the progress of projects. The groups say the Corps needs more external input and review and assure they are using updated figures when evaluating projects. A Corps spokesman dismissed the claims, asserting that the charges are the same ones made previously. The Corps has come under some degree of criticism from the Administration, OMB and GAO for cost overruns and errors in estimates of benefits on several projects, and is undergoing a reorganization to reduce management staff and improve efficiency.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/031904a1.htm>

NSF Director retires (The Chronicle for Higher Education 2/11/2004; National Science Foundation 2/11/2004; Government Executive 2/10/2004) – National Science Foundation Director Rita Colwell announced her retirement, effective February 21. Colwell has accepted a position with a private-sector company, and will retain her faculty position at the University of Maryland. Ms. Colwell was appointed as director in 1998. During her tenure, the NSF’s budget grew from \$3.4 billion to \$5.6 billion and fostered more multi-disciplinary awards. Colwell also increased NSF’s investment in mathematics, urged increases in graduate-student stipends, and promoted expanded opportunities for minorities and women in science and engineering disciplines. Colwell also initiated the GK-12 program, which placed promising science and engineering graduate students into K-12 classrooms. The White House named the NSF a “model” agency, due to the organization obtaining the highest achievement ratings of any federal agency in the President’s Management Agenda. Arden Bement, Jr., the director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, has been named interim director. Bement is considered an “unknown quantity” in Washington, where his low-key approach and apparent preference for scholarly pursuits has some wondering if he can effectively lead the NSF. [*Thanks to John Cortinas for the lead.*]

<http://www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/news/04/pr0420.htm>

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/021004tdpm2.htm>

Senator calls for “housecleaning” at Federal Technology Service (Government Executive 1/13/2004) – An audit revealing that the Federal Technology Service was in violation of existing laws and regulations led Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) to call for a “thorough housecleaning” of the agency. The audit reviewed limited competition on contracts, improperly awarded contracts, and misuse of federal funds. The FTS, part of the GSA, purchases information technology on behalf of other federal agencies for a fee.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/011304h1.htm>

NOAA honored for workplace excellence (NOAA 2/12/2004) – NOAA received a Workplace Excellence Seal of Approval from the Maryland Work-Life Alliance. The award notes a variety of employee-friendly policies, including alternate work schedules, telework, health seminars, onsite daycare, a fitness center, and Take Our Daughters/Sons to Work day.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-r901.html>

NWS Southern Region names new deputy director (NOAA 2/26/2004) – Steven Cooper has been appointed deputy director of the NWS Southern Region, replacing Gary Grice, who retired in January. Cooper was promoted from chief of the Southern Region’s Climate, Water and Weather Division, and has been with the office since 1992. During his tenure as assistant chief of the Meteorological Services Division, he oversaw the region’s implementation of the NWS modernization and restructuring during the mid 1990s. Cooper worked with his predecessor in developing a leadership development program, called Building Leaders for a Solid Tomorrow (BLAST) and worked closely in securing the support of the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes for the Turn Around, Don’t Drown program.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-r219.html>

STATE & LOCAL

State spending set at \$4.9 billion (Oklahoman 2/18/2004) – State officials certified \$4.9 billion as the fiscal year 2005 estimate, an increase of \$28 million over the estimate provided in December. The estimate gives the state \$22.5 million more to appropriate than it had in fiscal year 2004. Income, sales, and use taxes were cited as reasons for the increased projection.

Legislature passes omnibus appropriations measure (Oklahoman 3/23/2004) – After considering a veto, Governor Henry signed into law a \$5.3 billion omnibus appropriations bill. It is the earliest in recent memory that the state has passed all appropriations bills. Despite signing the bill, several issues remain. Governor Henry voiced concerns that the appropriations bill does not address the \$5 million he requested for targeted buyouts of properties in the Tar Creek Superfund site and other new initiatives. Republican legislative leaders are considering challenging the bill, arguing that \$30 million of the appropriations is anticipated revenues from a new gaming compact, and has not been certified by the State. In addition, it is not clear whether funding for pay raises for state employees is fully covered. Nonetheless, the appropriations bill includes \$2 billion for common education (a 3% increase over FY04), \$800 million for higher education (a 4.3% increase), and full health coverage for teachers. The bill is an overall 3.8% increase over FY04. Agency appropriations as compared to FY04 include:

• Agriculture	FY04: \$22.6 million	FY05: \$22.1 million
• Commerce	\$21.5 million	\$22.9 million
• Tourism & Rec.	\$22.6 million	\$23.3 million
• CareerTech	\$117.8 million	\$123.7 million
• Common Ed.	\$1.95 billion	\$2.0 billion
• Higher Ed.	\$768.1 million	\$796.9 million
• Human Services	\$387.4 million	\$403.6 million
• Juvenile Affairs	\$90 million	\$90.7 million
• Corrections	\$373.9 million	\$384.1 million
• Transportation	\$192.1 million	\$200.7 million

[Note: the Governor's initiatives are addressed in subsequent legislation. SB 1272 provides for teacher pay raises; SB 1106 provides for full coverage of teacher health insurance; SB 1546 will include a tobacco tax increase to pay for health coverage for uninsured Oklahomans and building a cancer research center; SB 1490 provides funds for a voluntary relocation of families with young children in the Tar Creek Superfund site.]

House and Senate agree to state raises (Oklahoman 4/1/2004) – Legislative leaders in conference over House Bill 2005 agreed to a \$2,100 state employee pay increase, phased in starting in January. State employees will receive a \$1,400 increase beginning January 1, and an additional \$700 increase beginning in July 2005. This would be the first raise for state employees since 2000. The House estimates the cost will be \$70 million per year, covering about 34,000 employees. Raises do not apply to elected officials, Cabinet officers, or agency directors.

Oklahoma allocated \$32 million for Homeland Security (Oklahoman 4/1/2004) – Oklahoma will receive more than thirty million dollars in federal support for Homeland Security during the next two years. The funding will be used for the Citizens Corps Programs, the State Homeland Security Program, and the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program. Funds may be administered through a permanent Office of Homeland Security, which is authorized in House Bill 2280, currently being considered in the state Senate.

Bill would allow state employees to run for office (Oklahoman 4/3/2004) – Senate Bill 868 would authorize state employees to take a six-month unpaid leave of absence to run for office, subject to approval of the employee’s supervisor. The bill passed the Senate and is being heard by the House.

House considers burn bill (Oklahoman 4/1/2004) – House members are considering Senate Bill 1360, which would create “burn masters” to assist land owners in managing proscribed burns. The bill aims at helping ranchers and farmers use fire to control the Red Cedar, an invasive species that affects the quality of pastures and water and heightens the threat of wildfires. The principal issue being debated in the House is liability.

House begins impeachment process (Oklahoman 3/25/2004; 3/31/2004) – The Oklahoma House of Representatives approved a measure to begin an investigation of impeachable offenses by state Insurance Commissioner Carroll Fisher. Fisher has been indicted and charged with embezzlement and operating a charity illegally. The articles were introduced by Representatives John Trebilcock (R-Broken Arrow) and Fred Morgan (R-Oklahoma City). This is the first such proceeding in the House in ten years, and Articles of Impeachment have not been referred to the Senate for trial in thirty years. Two governors, Jack Walton in 1923 and Henry Johnston in 1929, and Supreme Court Justice N.B. Johnson in the 1960s have been removed from office; Secretary of State John Rogers resigned in 1975 after Articles of Impeachment were passed in the House. Fisher is also an announced candidate for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Don Nickles.

Easley wins Senate seat (Oklahoman 4/7/2004) – State Representative Mary Easley defeated Jeff Johnson to fill the remaining three years of a Senate seat vacated by her son, Senator Kevin Easley. Kevin Easley resigned from the Senate upon becoming general manager of the Grand River Dam Authority. Representative Easley’s seat will remain vacant until the general election.

Oklahoma legislature broadcast live (Oklahoman 2/6/2004) – Audio service for the Senate and House, provided by the Oklahoma Education Television Authority, has been added to the Senate and House web sites. This enables Oklahomans to listen to legislative proceedings via the Internet.

Grand River Dam may be for sale (Oklahoman 10/31/2003) – A panel reviewing ideas to fund a \$1 billion endowment proposed by the Economic Development Generating Excellence (EDGE) initiative suggested the state could sell some assets, including the Grand River Dam Authority. The Authority was created by the legislature in 1935 as a water conservation district and has become one of Oklahoma’s largest electricity providers. The Authority uses tax-exempt bonds to fund projects, which allows it to provide electricity at lower rates than other providers. The committee expected selling the Authority could generate \$400 million. Other assets considered were CompSource, formerly known as the State Insurance Fund (\$100 million), the Mid-America Industrial Park near Choteau (\$75 million), and various real estate worth possibly \$200 million.

Towns building safe rooms (Oklahoman 3/6/2004) – Using grants from FEMA, towns across Oklahoma are installing safe rooms in their schools. The FEMA grant, providing \$15.2 million in matching funds, have been allocated to 64 schools in 51 school districts across the state. These safe rooms are designed to hold the school’s entire population, in the event of an emergency, which could number 1,500 people or more. Most shelters are open to the public during after-school hours as well.

Oklahoma employers not likely to hire in 2004 (Oklahoman 3/6/2004) – A survey by the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission reveals that employers do not anticipate much hiring in the coming year. The survey of 1,471 businesses revealed that 82% anticipated maintaining current staffing levels. Twelve percent said they planned to hire, while 5.6% said they anticipated cuts. Although this does not reflect growth in employment, analysts note that it is an improvement over the past three years in which employment levels in Oklahoma declined. The national unemployment rate stands at 5.6%, and some economists were dismayed that fewer jobs than anticipated were added in February.

Oklahoma moves up in technology index (Oklahoman 3/31/2004) – Oklahoma ranked 35th in the State Technology and Science Index, up two spots from the first such index in 2002. The study, conducted by the Milken Institute, measured 75 individual indicators in five major categories: research and development inputs, risk capital and infrastructure, human capital investment, technology and science work force, and technology concentration. Massachusetts, California, and Colorado led the Index. Rhode Island showed the biggest improvement, moving from 21st to 11th, and Texas dropped from 14th to 23rd. Mississippi, Arkansas, and Kentucky scored lowest. Oklahoma scored best in the technology and science workforce category, ranking 28th, and its best improvement was in the risk capital and infrastructure category, moving from 39th to 31st. Oklahoma scored lowest in the research and development inputs, at 44th and had the largest decline in the human capital investments category, dropping from 35th to 41st.

Nonprofit organization helping to promote Oklahoma's wheat (Oklahoman 3/3/2004) – Plains Grains, Inc., based in Stillwater, was launched in February to help Oklahoma farmers compete in the international marketplace. Noting that many countries operate “wheat boards” that helps growers export their products, the new corporation will help producers match the types of grain they grow to specific markets. Unlike other wheat boards, however, the company will not actually purchase and export the wheat; rather it will act as a facilitator to help producers make more informed decisions. Plains Grains will also direct customers to producers in certain areas of the state and conduct quality tests to identify certain characteristics required by customers. The organization was created through the sponsorship of the Oklahoma Wheat Commission, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and Oklahoma State University's Division of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources.

OG&E signs deal for cogeneration power purchase (Oklahoman 3/30/2004) – After months of open warfare over a power purchase agreement, OG&E and PowerSmith Cogeneration agreed to a 15-year power purchase agreement. Steam, a byproduct of the cogeneration facility, is used by Dayton Tire Company in Oklahoma City, which saves Dayton \$5 to \$7 million per year in avoided energy costs. OG&E had wanted to purchase power from a new power plant in McClain County, in which OG&E plans to buy a 77 percent interest. The deal keeps both the cogeneration plant going as well as preserving the 1,800 jobs at the Dayton Tire plant. Details of the purchase agreement were not disclosed.

New wind farm proposed in Oklahoma (Oklahoman 4/7/2004) – FPL Energy is waiting on federal tax credits before beginning development of a \$100 million wind farm planned for the Weatherford area. The company is still finalizing a power purchase agreement and completing land acquisition. The proposed farm would have 70 turbines, the largest in the state, and could expand by another 30-40 turbines.

Edmond offers green power alternative (Oklahoman 2/14/2004) – Edmond Electric is offering a green-power pricing plan, called “Pure & Simple”. The city-owned utility plans to offer energy from wind generation sources for a monthly premium of \$1 per 100 kilowatt-hours. The energy is generated from the FPL wind farm near Woodward and obtained via OMPA.

Oklahoma Stability Network conference (Oklahoman 3/13/2004) – The third annual Oklahoma Stability Network conference drew about 200 people, representing both environmental advocacy and industry officials. The conference, which was sponsored by OG&E, highlighted new wind energy developments in the state and sought to demonstrate the often-unaccounted benefits for energy efficiency. For example, applying a film to a window reduces energy costs, but it also reduces fading in carpets and draperies, extending the life of those products. Oil and gas companies also attended. Some, such as Halliburton, had representatives interested in technology and ways to reduce waste.

Governor urges use of ethanol (Oklahoman 12/31/2003) – Governor Henry urged agencies to use more ethanol in state fleets. The state operates a fueling station that provides E85, a blend of 85% ethanol and 15% gasoline. Many newer vehicles are able to run on either E85 or gasoline. In addition to environmental benefits, increased use of ethanol can help the state’s agriculture industry, particularly creating a market for hull-less barley.

Cities tackle ozone problems (Oklahoman 3/17/2004) – Oklahoma City and Tulsa contracted with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality to monitor and project ozone levels for the next several years. Data and computer models suggest both cities will remain in compliance for the immediate future, but Tulsa may not be in compliance by 2007. City officials are working with the Indian Nations Council of Governments and the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments to better coordinate activities during times of higher ozone concentrations.

Superfund sites cleanup progressing slowly (Oklahoman 3/7/2004) – Oklahoma is home to 10 active sites on the EPA’s superfund list, ranging from abandoned refineries to the Tar Creek area in northeastern Oklahoma. Three sites have been cleaned up and de-listed and two other sites are nearly completed. Since 1983, the EPA has spent \$250 million on cleanups in Oklahoma, while the state has provided \$13 million in matching funds. Companies responsible for the sites, where such can be identified, have paid nearly \$200 million. Sites remaining on the list include three sites in Oklahoma City, one each in Ardmore, Collinsville, Criner, Cyril, Cushing, and Midwest City, and the 40-square-mile Tar Creek site.

Carson, Inhofe trade accusations over Tar Creek (Oklahoman 2/26/2004) – Senator Jim Inhofe accused Representative Brad Carson of intimidating a private company that Inhofe arranged to conduct buyouts in the Tar Creek Superfund site. Carson met with the director of Cherokee Investment Partners, based in Raleigh, N.C., in what he described as an “informational and introductory” meeting. Inhofe claims that Carson discouraged the company from pursuing a voluntary buyout. Carson favors a federal buyout for residents in the towns of Picher and Cardin, claiming that the private-sector company will offer much less than fair-market-value for acquisition of properties within the Superfund site. In response to Inhofe’s accusation, Carson said that “Senator Inhofe is assuming that I would behave the way he behaves.”

Foster child removed from Picher (Tulsa World 2/27/2004) – Governor Henry directed the state Department of Human Services to no longer place children under six years of age in homes in the Picher-Cardin area, the epicenter of the Tar Creek Superfund site. A three-year-old child was removed from foster care in the area recently. Young children are more susceptible to lead poisoning from the contaminated area. [*Thanks to Cerry Leffler for the story.*]

State water legislation fails in committee (Norman Transcript 2/20/2004) – Senate Bill 898 would have given broader rights to cities to provide water to customers, but threatened to undermine the customer base of rural water districts. After many amendments to make the measure palatable to opponents, the bill – gutted of virtually all substantive language – died in committee. Legislators had to balance competing interests of rural and urban areas in their districts, often with conflicting emotions. According to Senator Owen Laughlin (R-Woodward), “it’s kind of like watching your mother-in-law go over a cliff in your brand-new Cadillac.” The bill hoped to resolve some of the disputes that have erupted over service areas recently.

Agency helps cities obtain clean water (Oklahoman 2/29/2004) – The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality is working with thirty small towns in Oklahoma that are in violation of Oklahoma’s or federal standards for drinking water systems. Problems range from infrastructure to excessive organic materials. In addition, new EPA standards pose compliance challenges for many communities. When a problem is detected, DEQ works with communities to develop a plan to address the issue, called a consent order. The community is then given time to fix the problem. If it is not resolved, DEQ may impose fines, but few communities come to that stage. The DEQ also assists towns struggling with financial issues to obtain grants and low-interest loans from sources such as the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund or the OWRB.

Scenic Rivers panel adds members (Oklahoman 3/11/2004) – The Arkansas River Compact Commission added state agency representatives from Oklahoma and Arkansas to its membership for developing a pollution monitoring plan for the Arkansas River basin. The agreement to monitor the rivers was part of negotiations between the two states over control of sources of phosphorus, which causes algae blooms, in the watershed. The plan should be ready to implement by summer.

Canadian County looks to Eufaula for water (Oklahoman 2/18/2004) – With growing opposition and legal barriers to tapping water from the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer, Canadian County officials are examining alternatives for future sources of water. The latest consideration is building a pipeline from Lake Eufaula in eastern Oklahoma to Canadian County communities, including El Reno, Mustang, Yukon and Piedmont. The pressure to find an alternate source is attributed to new EPA regulations that go into effect in 2006. The new regulations will make many wells and water treatment facilities in the county out of compliance. Residents in the Lake Eufaula area, however, have begun voicing opposition, especially in light of a decline in water levels over the last year.

Colleges submit wish list (Oklahoman 2/14/2004) – Oklahoma’s colleges outlined 140 projects to be part of a \$500 million bond proposal. Projects include 44 new or renovated classrooms, nine performing arts halls and 11 science labs and research centers. Nearly half the funds would go to OU and OSU. The University of Oklahoma plans to use \$28 million for chemistry and biochemistry facilities and \$20 million to improve engineering facilities. OSU has requested \$68 million for a research laboratory for bioterrorism research.

OCAST returns 18-to-one (Oklahoman 4/2/2004) – The Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology (OCAST) posted an 18-to-1 return on investment during fiscal 2003. The \$11 million spent on OCAST grants generated more than \$200 million in private and federal funding, consistent with the \$15 to \$20 per dollar spent during the last several years. The big performers were the Small Business Research Assistance, which returned \$18.8 million on awards of \$176,845, and the Inventor’s Assistance Alliance for Manufacturing Excellence, which returned \$82.4 million on awards of \$1 million. The \$3 million spent on the Oklahoma Health Research Program helped biomedical researchers bring in \$18.5 million, usually in small grants that produce preliminary data used in winning larger grants later.

State lagging in matching endowments (Oklahoman 3/6/2004) – Nearly fifty endowed chairs have raised private funding, but are awaiting the state match. The \$9-12 million annually appropriated as match for endowed chairs has not been sufficient to keep up with growth. Since 1989, 195 chairs, 150 professorships and 106 lectureships have been established at Oklahoma universities and colleges. Some legislators are endorsing a bond issue as a means to pay for the \$44 million needed to match the outstanding private contributions, and Governor Henry has asked the state legislature to find alternative sources of funding. [*Note: Legislation in the state Senate would provide a \$50 million bond issue to cover the outstanding commitments.*]

OU appoints new regents (Oklahoman 3/26/2004) – Stephen Bentley of Lawton was selected as chairman of the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents, succeeding G.T. Blankenship who is finishing his term on the Board. Bentley has been a member of the Board of Regents since 1993. Christy Everest of Oklahoma City, appointed to a seven-year term in 1999, was named vice chairwoman. Larry Wade, publisher of the Elk City Daily News, succeeds Blankenship on the regents board. Chris Purcell will remain executive secretary and vice president for university governance.

OSU outlines vision in town meeting (Oklahoman 2/24/2004) – Oklahoma State University President David Schmidly said that OSU aims to be among the nation’s top 75 universities. Schmidly unveiled the “Achieving Greatness” strategic plan at a town meeting in Oklahoma City. The plan, a product of a yearlong effort, outlines resources, increases in private funding, and specific priorities. Among the goals are reducing the 1:21 ratio of students to faculty, increasing undergraduate enrollment, toughening admissions requirements, increasing the university’s positive exposure, and targeting research. Research areas include: sensor technology, animal-based agriculture and biotechnology, advanced engineering materials, environmental sciences and rural health care.

OSU focusing on licensing research (Oklahoman 2/12/2004) – Senior officials at Oklahoma State University are saying that a change in culture may be necessary to boost revenues from research. Joe Alexander, president of OSU’s Education, Research and Economic Development Foundation and vice president of external relations, said that the land-grant culture may inhibit successful economic ventures. The land-grant culture, according to Alexander, focuses on giving away what is produced. In order to increase revenues, OSU is expanding its technology transfer office, creating a New Products Development Center focused on rural Oklahoma, and developing the Oklahoma Technology and Research Park in Stillwater. Alexander pointed to successes at The University of Oklahoma, where \$7.9 million was raised in licensing revenue between 1998 and 2002, creating 14 companies and employing 126 people with an average salary of \$71,420. Alexander also serves as Governor Henry’s Secretary of Science and Technology.

Oklahoma gets more diverse (USA Today 1/15/2004) – Oklahoma’s school population indicated a 9.2% increase in Hispanic students and a 3.5% increase in Native American students last year. The state is considering plans to hire more bilingual teachers and train others in communication skills.

Internet access in rural areas (Oklahoman 2/23/2004) – Every day, more isolated rural areas stretching out to Oklahoma’s Panhandle are getting connected to the Internet. The Beaver County town of Balko recently installed a high-speed T1 Internet link to its school. A recent study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project (<http://www.pewinternet.org/>) found that just more than half of rural adults use the Internet, compared to about two-thirds of urban and suburban residents. SBC Oklahoma says 1.2 million homes and businesses in Oklahoma are capable of using DSL service.

Nearly every classroom has Internet access (Oklahoman 3/26/2004) – Nearly every classroom in the state’s 541 school districts has Internet access and the ratio of computers to students is at an all-time high, according to a report issued by the state Education Department. Statewide, there is a computer for every 2.61 students, a total of nearly 240,000 computers in classrooms. Last year, the ratio was 3.46 students per computer. Federal funds for computers and software allowed schools to purchase computers, despite state budget cuts in other areas.

WEATHER & CLIMATE

Western drought retains tight grip (Las Vegas Review-Journal 4/12/2004) – Optimism over early-season snowpack has given way to pessimistic outlooks, typical of the last several years across the Western United States. As the snowpack shrinks, earlier than normal, concerns about water supplies, drought, and wildfires are increasing. Portions of the West have been in a state of drought for nearly ten years, and the last two years have experienced widespread drought from the Mexican to Canadian borders. Kelly Redmond, regional climatologist at the Western Regional Climate Center, said the warm, dry March across the West had a tremendous negative impact on snowcover, the region's primary source of water.

http://www.reviewjournal.com/lvrj_home/2004/Apr-12-Mon-2004/news/23636340.html

January chill in northeastern U.S. (NOAA 2/17/2004) – States from the Carolinas to the Northeast and Midwest were colder than average in January, while much of the rest of the country was near-normal. Maine, Vermont, Connecticut and Rhode Island reported well-below-average temperatures, and Massachusetts had its coldest January on record. Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona were the only states to report warmer than average temperatures for the month. The mean temperature for the contiguous United States was reportedly 0.2 degrees F below average, making January the 49th coldest of the past 110 years. Meanwhile, snowfall continued across the northern Rockies, lending hope of moderating a long drought. However, southwestern states were generally dry during January, continuing drought concerns across the southern Rockies.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-014.html>

Governor kicks off severe-weather preparedness campaign (Oklahoma Governor's Office 4/2/2004) – Governor Henry announced a new statewide severe weather preparedness campaign, called McReady. The campaign includes city, county and state emergency management officials, volunteer response agencies, and corporate sponsors including McDonalds and OG&E. The program will include displays and informational materials in McDonalds restaurants during April. Floods, tornadoes, lightning, emergency preparedness and NOAA weather radios will be highlighted. In addition, McDonalds will provide severe-weather themed tray liners and drive-through bag stuffers throughout the month.

http://www.governor.state.ok.us/display_article.php?article_id=273&article_type=1

NOAA issues service assessment report (NOAA 3/17/2004) – The National Weather Service released a service assessment on the performance of its forecast operations during the severe weather outbreak in May 2003. NOAA Administrator V. Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher said those interviewed indicated no surprises in outlooks, statements, watches and warnings issued before and during the event. The average lead time for tornado warnings was 19 minutes and the average time for tornado watches were just over two hours, both beating national averages. The report includes nine recommendations for improvements, including future operations and warnings and strengthening cooperation with other agencies on damage surveys. The report is available at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/assessments/index.shtml>.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/mar04/noaa04-025.html>

New advisories consider more than weather (USA Today 1/15/2004) – The National Weather Service is working on a new index to better delineate life-threatening conditions in the summertime. The heat index, based on temperature and humidity, fails to take into account other factors that affect resiliency to heat exposure. The new system will include geographical factors, the time of day, cloud cover, wind and other elements. Demographic information, such as population density and housing types, will be included in the model. Several cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C., are already using the new method. Heat is related to nearly 1,000 deaths annually in the United States, more than all other weather phenomena combined.

New weather model to be tested this spring (Oklahoman 4/6/2004) – A new computer model will be employed by weather researchers and forecasters for several cities for an eight-week test. The model, which produces output on a 2.5-mile grid and requires a supercomputer to run, will be used from mid-April to the first week of June in Norman, Oklahoma. The project is a collaboration between the National Severe Storms Laboratory, the Storm Prediction Center, The National Center for Atmospheric Research, the National Weather Service, and researchers from several universities. The goal is to develop improved models and forecasting abilities, to provide earlier warnings – up to two hours in advance – on a county-level scale. In addition, researchers anticipate that the model will improve forecasting in mountainous and coastal areas.

Earth Observation System meeting held in South Africa (NOAA 2/25/2004) – NOAA Administrator Conrad Lautenbacher attended an intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) meeting in South Africa, in preparation for a ministerial meeting scheduled for Tokyo in the Spring of 2004. The meeting, held in Cape Town, was to discuss input from subgroups for the Draft Framework Document. The goal of the meetings is to design and implement a new global observing system that links thousands of individual technological assets into a comprehensive Earth observation system, able to address global economic, social, and scientific needs.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-020.html>

NASA launches improved climate website (NASA 3/1/2004) – NASA has redesigned their Global Change Master Directory (GCMD), a directory of Earth science data and services. The website, <http://globalchange.nasa.gov> or <http://gcmd.nasa.gov>, categorizes information according to 9 tabs. The site is designed to provide data sets and services relevant to global climate change research. Data categories include agriculture, atmosphere, biosphere, climate indicators, human dimensions, hydrosphere, land surface, oceans, paleoclimate, snow and ice, solid earth, spectral/engineering and Sun-Earth interactions. The directory contains 15,000 data sets and services and links to more than 76,000 resources.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2004/04-013.htm>

East-West Center receives RISA funding (NOAA 2/17/2004) – The East-West Center in Honolulu, HI, received a \$535,000 grant from NOAA to develop a Regional and Integrated Sciences and Assessment (RISA) program for the Pacific Islands. The region includes Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The program will focus on developing climate services to reduce vulnerability to climate variability and extremes.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/feb04/noaa04-r502.html>

Snowfall seasons changing (UCAR Quarterly Winter 2003-04) – Research by Daria Scott (University of Delaware) and Dale Kaiser (Oak Ridge National Laboratory) indicates that snow seasons across the United States have changed over the past fifty years. In the Pacific Northwest, the average number of snow days, the length of the snow season, and average seasonal snowfall all declined significantly. Meanwhile, an area across the northern U.S., from roughly Colorado to Minnesota has a snow season that now begins as much as 20 days earlier, while further south, from Missouri to the Atlantic seaboard, the snow season begins up to 20 days later. The study was presented at the annual AMS meeting.

<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/quarterly/winter04/science.html>

PDO dictates droughts and deluge (NASA 1/28/2004) – NASA-supported research, presented at the annual meeting of the American Meteorological Society by Steve LaDochy (UCLA) and Bill Patzert (NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory), suggests that the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) may be useful in forecasting seasonal West Coast temperature and precipitation patterns up to a year in advance. PDO influences are strong in the North Pacific and North America, and its long-term persistence makes it a useful forecasting tool. The researchers combined satellite-observed ocean conditions with land-based data and found a strong signal along the West Coast. The PDO's negative, cool phase, leads to wetter conditions in the Pacific Northwest and drier than normal conditions in Central and Southern California and exacerbates dry conditions in the west that lead to wildfire outbreaks. The researchers noted that the PDO will remain in its cool phase for some time, suggesting five-year droughts may return to the region.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/topstory/2004/0116westcoast.html>

Model suggests land cover affects summer climate (NASA 3/24/2004) – NASA researchers simulated land cover patterns and changes over a 300-year period, and determined that land use has a significant impact on summer climate in the United States. Replacing grasslands with farms produces a regional cooling, more than one degree Fahrenheit, across the Great Plains and Midwest, and replacing forests with croplands in the Eastern U.S. created a warming effect, through decreased evapotranspiration. The cooling across the Great Plains, in turn, reduced the temperature gradient between the region and the Gulf of Mexico, which in turn slowed the northward progression of weather systems. The result, they found, was enhanced rainfall across Texas and decreased precipitation in the upper Midwest.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2004/h04-103.htm>

Holes in magnetic field make Earth vulnerable (Space.com 12/4/2003) – During large solar storms, Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs) are able to create holes in the Earth's magnetic field, allowing ions to penetrate further into the Earth's atmosphere. These gaps have been found to be as large as the state of California and to exist for several hours. During a recent event, NASA satellites studied such an event in the atmosphere above the North Pole. Harald Frey, from the University of California, Berkeley, equated the finding to a drafty house during a storm: "the house deflects most of the storm, but the couch is ruined."

http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/earth_defenses_031204.html

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Federal R&D budget hearing held (House Science Committee 2/11/2004) – The House Science Committee met to review the FY2005 budget request for research and development. The overall R&D budget request includes a 5% increase over FY04. Excluding DOD and DHS funding, the average increase is 2.3%. Nearly all of the requested increases are for development; basic and applied research would receive increases of 0.6 and 0.5%, respectively. The Federal Science and Technology (FS&T) budget, which excludes defense development, testing, and evaluation, declines by 0.4%. Commerce and EPA are particularly affected, with 15 and 14 percent cuts, respectively. The committee also noted a disparity in funding between the physical and biological sciences. Physical sciences research is funded at about the same level, in constant dollars, as it was in 1993 while biological research has more than doubled. The committee noted that the NSF budget request, at \$5.75 billion, while representing a 3.0 percent increase, falls \$1.6 billion below the funding level of the *National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2002* (P.L. 107-368). The committee also noted that NOAA moved programs from OAR to NWS in the FY05 request, making major structural changes without fully examining the ramifications or consulting with the authorizing committees.

<http://www.house.gov/science/hearings/full04/index.htm> (see Charter for summary)

NIH tries to balance interests (National Journal 2/13/2004) – The National Institutes of Health has come under criticism for incentives offered to scientists. At a January 22 Senate hearing, it was revealed that in order to recruit top scientists, NIH officials offer an incentive package that includes pay rates up to \$200,000 per year, the right to make financial deals with outside companies, and the freedom to use the institutes' laboratories to pursue their own discoveries. NIH Director Elias Zerhouni said that the ability for the scientists to pursue long-term research is a critical element of recruitment; otherwise many would choose to remain at commercial or university-based research centers. The concern is that allowing NIH scientists being able to make deals with private companies, like their university-based counterparts, may create a conflict-of-interest with taxpayer needs, geared more toward short-term gains in medical therapies. NIH will create an advisory panel to review some NIH practices and make recommendations for reforms.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/021304nj1.htm>

Technological literacy symposium (National Academies 4/9/2004) – The National Academy of Engineering and National Academies' Center for Education will host a symposium on technological literacy, beginning at 8 a.m. EDT Thursday, April 28. The event will bring together state education leaders from across the country to discuss the issue of technological literacy. The symposium will be broadcast live on the web. For additional details and instructions on submitting questions, see <http://www.nae.edu/nae/naetech.nsf/weblinks/MKEZ-5XNHRY?OpenDocument>

Agencies get mixed grades on technology management (Government Executive 3/3/2004) – A House Government Reform subcommittee recently reviewed progress on the Clinger-Cohen Act, which established guidelines for federal technology investment and management. A review found that agencies, eight years after passage of the Act, still do not fully meet its requirements. Few agencies monitor performance of their IT goals, according to the GAO, and many do not have adequate cybersecurity protections. More than half of federal IT projects are on an OMB “watch list”, meaning if weaknesses are not addressed, funding could be cut.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/030304dk1.htm>

Mangers tout ‘open source’ software (Government Executive 3/15/2004) – Federal agencies are increasingly using “open source” software, according to a meeting of senior government technology officers. Open source software increases the flexibility of the IT staff to customize software, allowing innovation to percolate upward through an agency, and has proven applicable to e-government initiatives. Barry West, CIO at FEMA, has moved much of the agency operations to a Linux-based system, after being sold on Linux during his time with the National Weather Service. West said that open source “improved performance, encouraged communication among developers and shortened our development cycle” In the NWS. West predicted that CIOs not using open source now will be within the next two years.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/031504td1.htm>

NASA reorganization planned (Government Executive 1/15/2004) – NASA Deputy Administrator Frederick Gregory announced a restructuring of the agency’s headquarters. The new structure will include an Office of Exploration Systems that will set priorities for space vehicle research and validation of space flight systems. The organization will also include an Office of Aeronautics, which will be a trimmed-down version of the Office of Aerospace Technology. Space transportation and vehicle launching will be managed through the office. The office of the NASA Administrator will be broken into four new independent office: the Office of the Chief Engineer; the Office of Health and Medical Systems; the Office of the Chief Information Officer; and the Office of Institutional and Corporate Management.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0104/011504sz1.htm>

Competition for the moon (Government Executive 3/3/2004) – NASA plans to run a contest to help develop ideas on how to send America back to the moon. The agency’s new Office of Exploration Systems will conduct the Centennial Challenge, named after the anniversary of the Wright Brothers’ first powered flight, in which companies will compete for the opportunity to develop technology to support human and robotic exploration and transportation systems. Instead of soliciting proposals, NASA will state technical goals and leave it up to competitors to develop means for achieving them. While new to government, awards competitions have spurred many significant historical developments. A British government prize was awarded to clockmaker John Harrison for his marine chronometer, used to determine longitude. Charles Lindbergh won the Orteig Prize for the first trans-Atlantic aviation crossing. Currently, the X-Prize Foundation is offering a \$10 million prize to the first repeatable, sub-orbital human space flight by an entrepreneur with no government ties. The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has a Grand Challenge, in which \$1 million will be awarded to the first autonomous vehicle to traverse a 300-mile course through the desert without external communications or human control.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0304/030304bd1.htm>

Online population tops 200 million (AFP 3/18/2004) – A survey by Nielsen/NetRatings showed 204.3 million, or nearly 75 percent of the U.S. population over two years of age, now have online access. This is up nine percent from the same period a year ago. Women exceed men for use of the internet; 77 percent of women between the ages of 25 and 34 use the Internet and 82 percent of those between 35 and 54. Men’s usage is 75.6 and 80 percent, respectively.

REPORTS & STUDIES

Climate change research plan should be implemented (National Academies 2/18/2004) – A second review of the U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) found the plan to be “much improved,” broader in scope and more ambitious than a previously-released draft. However, the committee reported, many proposed activities lack firm funding commitments. The committee urged the plan to be implemented promptly.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309088658?OpenDocument>

Science critical to advancement (National Academies 2/5/2004) – Application of up-to-date scientific knowledge and technology is critical to all nations to address challenges before them, says the InterAcademy Council. The finding was presented to the U.N. and is described in *Inventing a Better Future: A Strategy for Building Worldwide Capacities in Science and Technology*. Sound scientific knowledge and evidence-based principles are the basis of addressing issues including hunger, disease, the effects of globalization, and economic transformation, according to Bruce Alberts co-chair and president of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. The Council noted a growing gap between the “have” and “have not” nations. The report recommends that every nation develop an S&T strategy, including support for basic science, education, and training and linking research to national priorities. The Council includes representation by 90 of the world’s science academies.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/s02052004?OpenDocument>

Water use stable (USGS 3/11/2004) –American’s water use has remained fairly stable since 1985, despite growing population and increasing electricity production, according to a USGS report. USGS researchers conclude that even though personal use of water has increased, conservation is working. USGS Chief Hydrologist Robert Hirsch attributes the stability to advances in technology in irrigation and power generation, which combined account for 82% of water use. See <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/2004/circ1268/> to obtain the report.

http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1866m.html

USGS study documents water-level changes in High Plains Aquifer (USGS 2/9/2004) – A study of water level changes in the Ogallala aquifer region shows a 6% decline in the volume of water stored since pumping began in the 1940s. The High Plains Aquifer provides irrigation on about 27% of the irrigated land in the United States, underlying eight states from Nebraska to Texas and westward to the Rocky Mountains. The study showed that after a surge in withdrawal rates from the 1940s – 1970s, withdrawals have declined or held steady since then. The greatest depletions were in found in Texas and Kansas, which had declined 15-27%, and least in Nebraska. The report is available from USGS: <http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/circ/2003/circ1243/>.

http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1847m.html

Roundtable on Flood Losses (National Academies 2/6/2004) – The National Academies held its Tenth Roundtable Workshop on March 2, 2004. The workshop focused on “Reducing Future Flood Losses: The Role of Human Actions.” The Disasters Roundtable workshops are a series of discussions on natural hazards and their affects on and influence by society. Presentations, like those of previous workshops, are posted on the website. Sessions included Flood Policy, The Role of Government, Society’s Role in Reducing Flood Losses, the Role of Science and Technology, and Development Issues.

<http://dels.nas.edu/dr/f10.html>

Reducing impacts of disasters through improved earth observations (National Academies) – How can we use our ability to observe the Earth’s natural systems to create a disaster-resilient society and what challenges and limits remain in earth observation efforts? This question was explored by a variety of speakers and participants at the 9th Disasters Roundtable Workshop - Hazards Watch: Reducing Disaster Losses through Improved Earth Observations on October 22, 2003. Participants at the workshop discussed opportunities for reducing disaster losses by making the most of the technologies available through Earth observing systems, which produce highly-valuable information for policy makers and emergency managers. The report is available through the National Academy Press: <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10948.html>.

Long-term droughts related to North Atlantic temperatures (USGS 3/9/2004) – A report, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, found a link between large-scale, long-lasting droughts in the United States and warmer than normal sea surface temperatures in the North Atlantic Ocean. Previously, it was known that cooling in the Pacific was correlated with such drought occurrences. The study, conducted by USGS scientist Julio Bentancourt and Mike Palecki of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center, identified three prolonged continental-scale wet spells and three dry spells over the past century. Two of the three leading modes of drought frequency were found to be correlated with Pacific Decadal Oscillations (PDO) and Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillations (AMO). Positive, or warm, phases of the AMO were present in the 1930s, 1950s, and since 1995, corresponding to all three major drought episodes.

http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1865m.html

Flexible approach needed to protect salmon (National Academies 3/31/2004) – A review by the National Academies of Sciences concluded that if additional water is diverted from the Columbia River for irrigation, there should be mechanisms by which diversions can be terminated in order to protect endangered species. The report was requested by the Washington State Department of Ecology. The committee was not able to conclude which environmental factors pose the greatest threat to salmon, but found sufficient evidence that low flows or high water temperatures affect migratory behavior and lower survival rates.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309091551?OpenDocument>

Report Calls for Better Mapping of U.S. Coastlines (National Academies 3/11/2004) – A national project to collect real-time data on tides, topography and ocean depth along U.S. shorelines should be started to provide more accurate information about the country's coastal zones, including improved maps and charts, says a new report from the National Academies' Ocean Studies Board and Board on Earth Sciences and Resources. The report can be found at <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10947.html>.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

HR 6 – “Energy Policy Act of 2003”

- Status: In Conference (11/18/2003 Conference Report agreed to in House)
- Introduced: 4/7/2003 by Rep. Tauzin [LA-3]
- Committees: Passed House 247-175 on 4/11/2003; Passed Senate 84-14 on 7/31/2003 (S.14 substitute); Conference Report passed House 246-180; motion on cloture failed in Senate 57-40 on 11/12/2003
- Description: Omnibus energy legislation. Part II, Sections 1341-1345 contain language on climate services, including creating a National Climate Service Plan.

HR 135 – “Twenty First Century Water Commission Act of 2003”

- Status: Passed House; referred to Senate committee (12/9/2003)
- Introduced: 1/7/2003 by Rep. Linder [GA-7]
- Committees: Passed House 11/21/2003 by voice vote; Referred 12/9/2003 to Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Establishes the “Twenty-First Century Water Commission” to study and develop recommendations for a comprehensive water strategy to address future water needs. Guidelines for the Commission include respecting states rights, identifying incentives, avoiding unfunded mandates, eliminating duplication among Federal agencies, considering all available technologies, making recommendations for capturing excess water for use in times of drought, developing financing options for public works projects, and developing strategies for conservation and repair of infrastructure.

HR 238 – “Energy Research, Development, Demonstration, and Commercial Application Act of 2003”

- Status: Passed Committee (6/27/2003 House preparation for the floor)
- Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Boehlert [NY-24]
- Committees: Referred to House Resources and Science committees; Reported favorably from House Science Committee on 4/2/2003; Discharged from Resources Committee on 6/27/2003; placed on Union Calendar
- Description: Supports energy research, reduce consumption from imported sources, improve energy efficiency and supply, reduce environmental impacts, aid domestic production, and stimulate markets for advanced energy technologies.

HR 268 – “United States Weather Research Program Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to House subcommittee (2/20/2003)
- Introduced 1/8/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]
- Committees: House Committee on Science; referred to subcommittee
- Description: Authorizes appropriations for the Weather Research Program for fiscal years 2004-2006; sets research priorities including forecasts of strength and landfall of hurricanes, improving forecasts of heavy precipitation and winter storms, improving flood forecasting and warning systems, improving short and medium-range (2-14 day) forecasts, and examining societal and economic impacts, including evaluating methods for delivering information to users and assessing social and economic impacts.

HR 347 / S 515 – “Ombudsman Reauthorization Act of 2003”

- Status: (HR 347) Referred to House committee; (S 515) Passed Senate; referred to House subcommittee (6/2/2003)
- Introduced: (House) 1/27/2003 by Rep. Bilirakis [FL-9]; (Senate) 3/5/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]
- Committees: (House – HR 347) Committee on Energy and Commerce since 2/3/2003; (Senate – S 515) Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent of 5/21/2003; Referred to House Committee on Energy and Commerce
- Description: Would provide additional authority to the Office of EPA Ombudsman, making the office independent within the agency.

HR 460 – “Wildfire Prevention Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to House subcommittee (2/13/2003)
- Introduced 1/29/2003 by Rep. Hayworth [AZ-5]
- Committees: House Agriculture and Resources committees; referred to subcommittees
- Description: Establishes Institutes to conduct research on the prevention of and restoration from wildfires in the interior West.

HR 545 / S 321 – “Firefighting Research and Coordination Act”

- Status: (HR 545) Referred to House subcommittee (2/20/2003); (S 321) Referred to Senate subcommittee, hearings held (4/30/2003)
- Introduced: (House) 2/5/2003 by Rep. Camp [MI-4]; (Senate) 2/5/2003 by Sen. McCain [AZ]
- Committees: (House) Committee on Science (Senate) Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: provides for development of new technology and methods (“a scientific basis”) for new firefighting technology standards, improve coordination and training, and improving response to emergencies.

HR 748 – “Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth Study Act”

- Status: Referred to House committee (2/24/2003)
- Introduced 2/12/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Committees: House Committee on Resources; comment requested from CEQ
- Description: Requires Council on Environmental Quality to conduct a study on urban sprawl and smart growth.

HR 1292 – “Remote Sensing Applications Act of 2003”

- Status: Placed on Union Calendar, No. 243 (2/18/2004)
- Introduced 3/13/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Committees: Reported from House Committee on Science
- Description: Requires NASA to establish a grant program for pilot projects to explore the integrate use of sources of remote sensing and other geospatial information to address State, local, regional, and tribal agency needs; includes requirements for an advisory committee and independent evaluation and assist in development of commercial applications.

HR 1293 – “Family Farm and Ranch Innovation Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to House committee (3/19/2003 Executive Comment requested from USDA)
- Introduced: 3/13/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Committees: Committees on (1) Small Business and (2) Agriculture; Agriculture requested comment from USDA on 3/19/2003
- Description: authorize the Small Business Administration and Department of Agriculture to assist farmers and ranchers seeking to develop and implement agricultural innovation plans in order to increase their profitability in ways that provide environmental benefits

HR 1346 – “Federal Government Energy Management Improvement Act”

- Status: Placed on Union Calendar, No. 70 (6/2/2003)
- Introduced in House 3/19/2003 by Rep. Turner [OH-3]
- Committees: Reported favorably from House Committee on Government Reform (3/20/2003); Discharged from House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (6/2/2003); Placed on Union Calendar.
- Description: Encourages Federal procurement policies that enhance energy efficiency and reduce dependency on non-renewable energy sources.

HR 1578 – “Global Change Research and Data Management Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to House committees (5/1/2003: defeated measure to report)
- Introduced 4/2/2003 by Rep. Udall [CO-2]
- Committees: House (1) Science, (2) Budget, and (3) International Relations Committees
- Description: Directs the President to establish an interagency committee to coordinate federal research activities related to global change, develop and interagency research program to provide periodic assessments of the vulnerability of the U.S. and other regions, and develop a National Global Change Research Plan. Also requires the President to establish an interagency climate and other global change data management working group, including establishing an Office of Global Change Research Information.

HR 2447 – Interagency task force on biotechnology

- Status: Referred to House committees (6/24/2003 House committee requests comments)
- Introduced 6/12/2003 by Rep. Smith [MI-7]
- Committees: House (1) International Relations and (2) Agriculture Committees; Agriculture requests Executive Comment from USDA
- Description: Establishes a federal interagency task force to promote the benefits, safety, and potential uses of agricultural biotechnology.

HR 2871 / S 1454 – “National Drought Preparedness Act of 2003”

- Status: (HR 2871) Referred to House committees (9/11/2003; referred to House subcommittee); (S 1454) Referred to Senate committee (7/24/2003)
- Introduced: (House) 7/24/2003 by Rep. Hastings [FL-25]; (Senate) 7/24/2003 by Sen. Domenici [NM]
- Committees: (House): (1) Agriculture, (2) Resources, and (3) Transportation and Infrastructure – assigned to subcommittees within; (Senate): Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Description: Establishes a National Drought Council which shall: (1) develop a national drought policy action plan; (2) evaluate Federal drought-related programs; (3) coordinate and prioritize enhancement of the national integrated drought system; and (4) provide for the development of a drought information delivery system, drought planning models, and drought preparedness plans; also establishes a Drought Assistance Fund in USDA.

HR 3157 – Designation of USDA disaster liaison

- Status: Passed House; referred to Senate committee (11/18/2003)
- Introduced: 9/4/2003 by Rep. Blunt [MO-7]
- Committees: Passed House by voice vote on 11/17/2003; Referred to Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Description: Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to designate Department of Agriculture employees to serve for up to 30 days as disaster liaisons to State and local Department Service Centers to coordinate assistance with other designated disaster agencies in a federally declared disaster area.

HR 3261 – “Database and Collections of Information Misappropriation Act”

- Status: Placed on Union Calendar, No. 252 (3/11/2004)
- Introduced: 10/8/2003 by Rep. Coble [NC-6]
- Committees: Reported favorably from House Committee on the Judiciary 16-7 on 1/21/2004; referred sequentially to House Committee on Energy and Commerce, reported unfavorably by voice vote on 3/11/2004
- Description: Extends civil liabilities to distribution of a substantial part of the information contained in databases; provides exceptions for certain reasonable uses; excludes government and Federally funded mandated databases and computer programs from these protections

HR 3402 – “Permanent Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act”

- Status: Referred to House committee (11/3/2003 Comment requested)
- Introduced 10/29/2003 by Rep. Peterson [MN-7]
- Committees: House Committee on Agriculture; Executive comment requested from USDA
- Description: Would establish permanent authority for the Secretary of Agriculture to quickly assist agricultural producers who incur crop losses as a result of damaging weather or related conditions.

HR 3551 – “Surface Transportation Research and Development Act of 2003”

- Status: Introduced (2/4/2004 Reported from House Science Committee)
- Introduced 11/20/2003 by Rep. Ehlers [MI-3]
- Committees: Reported from House Committee on Science, still in House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (subcommittee)
- Description: Authorizes appropriations for research and development projects related to surface transportation; includes requirements for strategic planning and annual reporting; bill includes \$50-75 million annually for training and education, \$56-90 million annually for University Transportation Research, and \$130-145 million annually for Intelligent Transportation Systems research.

S 17 – “Global Climate Security Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (1/7/2003)
- Introduced 1/7/2003 by Sen. Daschle [SD]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Initiates federal actions to reduce risks from climate change to the economy, the environment, and quality of life (contains major provisions of climate change amendments to Energy Policy Act of 2002).

S 118 – “Emergency Warning Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (1/9/2003)
- Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Edwards [NC]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
- Description: Provides for development of an all-hazards public warning system.

S 139 – “Climate Stewardship Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (10/30/2003)
- Introduced 1/9/2003 by Sen. Lieberman [CT]
- Committees: Discharged from Committee on Environment and Public Works (10/29/2003); Amendment failed; Referred back to Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Provides for scientific research on abrupt climate change, establishes greenhouse gas emissions tradeable allowances that could be used interchangeably with passenger fuel economy standard credits, limits greenhouse gas emissions in U.S., and reduce dependence upon foreign oil.

S 194 – “National Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Registry Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (1/17/2003)
- Introduced 1/17/2003 by Sen. Corzine [NJ]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Establishes and inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and encourage voluntary reductions in emissions.

S 196 – “Digital and Wireless Network Technology Program Act of 2003”

- Status: Passed Senate; referred to House committee (7/21/2003)
- Introduced in Senate 1/17/2003 by Sen. Allen [VA]
- Committees: Passed Senate 97-0 (4/30/2003); Referred to House (1) Science and (2) Education and Workforce Committees
- Description: establishes \$250 million program in NSF to improve access to and use of digital and wireless network technology at minority-serving institutions; includes efforts to increase scientific, mathematical, engineering, and technology instructions and research.

S 212 – “High Plains Aquifer Hydrogeologic Characterization, Mapping and Modeling Act”

- Status: Passed Senate; referred to House committee (10/30/2003 House subcommittee hearings held; Comment requested from Interior)
- Introduced 1/23/2003 by Sen. Bingaman [NM]
- Committees: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent (4/7/2003); Referred to House Committee on Resources, Subcommittee on Water and Power
- Description: Authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to cooperate with the High Plains Aquifer States to conduct a hydrogeologic characterization, mapping, modeling and monitoring program for the aquifer (originally introduced in House in 2002).

S 561 – “State Water Sovereignty Protection Act”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (3/6/2003)
- Introduced: 3/6/2003 by Sen. Crapo [ID]
- Committees: Senate Committee on the Judiciary
- Description: Subjects management and control of water in a State to the laws of such State and delegates authority to regulate water to the States

S 791 – “Renewable Fuels Act”

- Status: Placed on Legislative Calendar, No. 119 (6/3/2003)
- Introduced in Senate 4/3/2003 by Sen. Inhofe [OK]
- Committees: Reported favorably (4/9/2003) by Environment and Public Works Committee; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar
- Description: would amend Clean Air Act to establish a renewable fuels program and set standards by 2005, encourage the use of ethanol, and phase out MTBE.

S 944 – “Renewable Energy Investment Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (4/29/2003)
- Introduced: 4/29/2003 by Sen. Jeffords [VT]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
- Description: establishes national renewable energy portfolio standards and markets and distributes receipts from the sale of credits to states for use in promoting renewable energy production, consumer rebates, distributed generation and research and development.

S 1164 – “Abrupt Climate Change Research Act of 2003”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee; ordered to be reported (3/9/2004)
- Introduced: 6/2/2003 by Sen. Collins [ME]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; ordered to be reported without amendment favorably.
- Description: Comprehensive research program on abrupt climate change, to be housed within NOAA; provides \$60 million for research on indicators and documenting past occurrences.

S 1400 – “Ocean and Coastal Observation Systems Act”

- Status: Passed Senate (1/5/2004 House committees requested Executive Comment)
- Introduced 7/14/2003 by Sen. Snowe [ME]
- Committees: Passed Senate by Unanimous Consent 10/31/2003; Referred to House (1) Resources, (2) Science, (3) Armed Services, and (4) Transportation and Infrastructure Committees; Resources requested Executive Comment from Commerce (11/13/2003); Armed Services requested Executive Comment from DOD (1/5/2004)
- Description: Establishes an integrated ocean and coastal observing system of marine monitoring, data communication and management, data analysis, and research to detect and predict changes in the marine environment; requires that at least 51% of NOAA funds be reserved for grants to develop and implement regional coastal observing systems (FY04-08).

S 2009 – “Sound Science for Endangered Species Act Planning Act of 2004”

- Status: Referred to Senate committee (1/20/2004)
- Introduced: 1/20/2004 by Sen. Smith [OR]
- Committees: Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
- Description: Amends the Endangered Species Act of 1973 to give greater weight to scientific or commercial data that is empirical or has been field-tested or peer-reviewed.

Sent to President

HR 1904 – “Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003”

- Status: Signed Into Law (12/3/2003 Became Public Law No: 108-148)
- Description: Bill would improve the capacity of the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands and Bureau of Management lands to reduce threats of wildfire.

S 189 – “21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act”

- Status: Signed Into Law (12/3/2003 Became Public Law No: 108-153)
- Description: creates advisory committee on nanotechnology, to be within the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST); increases spending on nanotechnology from \$677 million for one year to \$4.7 billion over five years and creates interdisciplinary research centers.