

# MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

### NATIONAL

Federal IT Research hearing  
OMB chief denies spending cuts  
Senate begins moving on appropriations  
Energy tax package passes Senate  
First responders grant formula debated  
Natural gas prices rise  
Labor Department reports productivity gains  
Deficit up \$56 billion from last year  
\$43 trillion in unfunded costs  
Conservation programs face cuts  
Governors endorse drought system  
Thirty-one states exceed air quality standards  
Environmental data goes online  
Legislation would rate agency performance  
Grants.gov goes operational  
e-government levels off  
States may restrict outsourcing  
SEVIS improves after rocky start  
Homeland Security alerts to be carried on weather radio  
Classified secrets increase 25 percent  
Stevens tops in "Pig Book" – again  
Kansas land run?

### AGENCY NEWS

NASA reorganization set for August 1  
Commission urges cabinet status for NASA  
Crawford named to lead NOAA effort  
Corps focuses on selected projects  
Homeland Security creates independent research center  
Homeland Security merges offices  
Bio-terrorism directive released  
OPM pushes on-the-spot hiring  
Federal agencies fare well in job competitions  
Noncompetitive contracts on the rise  
Performance requirements may be revolutionary  
OMB emphasizes property management

### STATE & LOCAL

Legislature wraps up session  
State puts \$200 million in rainy day fund  
Candidates file for office  
FY 2005 budget estimate certified  
Bond issue for endowed chairs  
Higher Education bond issue in trouble  
Water planning bill dies in  
Telecommunication task force named  
Republicans name floor leader  
Governor names new health secretary  
Norman city manager resigns  
Bode named president of power pool  
Highway cameras contract awarded

Oklahoma receives \$32 million for homeland security  
Oklahoma outpaces region in economic growth  
Oklahoma's electricity market continues growth  
Wheat crop gets good marks, despite drought  
Monitoring plan set  
Tar Creek buyout  
Concern over forest thinning  
OCAST President indicted  
Interim OSU dean selected  
Tulsa picks new president  
Test scores  
Oklahoma joins National LambdaRail  
Rural broadband service  
Oklahoma second in school Internet access  
Senator Muegge to receive award

### WEATHER & CLIMATE

Earth Observation Summit meeting  
Western Snowpack fails to live up to promise  
More hurricanes than normal forecasted for 2004  
NASA technology aiding weather forecasters  
Warm spring  
Spring soil moisture indicator of summer precipitation  
Greenhouse warming leads to wetter world  
Atlantic current weakens  
Earthshine reflects climate change  
New mass extinction

### SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Academies seeks feedback on presidential appointments process  
OMB releases new rules on peer review  
Senator challenges sampling technique  
NCAR combines sensors and models to test detection systems  
Technical innovation necessary for transportation  
Ralph Cicerone to take the helm of the National Academy of Sciences  
Academy chooses 72 new members  
Education symposium information on the web  
Academies library resources online

### REPORTS & STUDIES

Improving federal financing of academic research  
Report Lists Criteria for Evaluating K-12 Math Programs  
National Research Effort Needed to Secure Water Supply  
Integrated planning for water projects  
USGS outlines health of rivers  
Engineering profession requires changes  
TRB lists transportation titles

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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

**Federal IT Research hearing** (Government Executive 7/1/2004) – The House Government Reform Committee’s Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and the Census Subcommittee will hold a hearing on IT research on July 7 at 1:30 p.m. The hearing is entitled “Defining Federal Information Technology (IT) Research and Development: Who? Where? Why? And How Much?” See <http://reform.house.gov/TIPRC/> for further details.

**OMB chief denies spending cuts** (Government Executive 5/27/2004) – OMB Director Joshua Bolton said the request for agencies to assume spending cuts as they prepare their fiscal 2006 budgets was just a starting point for negotiations, and not a directive from the White House. Bolton said the budget message was “what the computer spits out to get the process started.” <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0504/052704cdpm1.htm>

**Senate begins moving on appropriations** (Government Executive 6/8/2004) – Senate Appropriations Chairman Ted Stevens (R-AK) hopes to hold his first markup before the July 4 recess, whether a budget resolution is passed or not. The House narrowly passed a budget bill in May, but the bill has been held up in the Senate, where Senate Budget Chairman Don Nickles (R-OK) has been unable to persuade Republican holdouts Olympia Snowe, Susan Collins, and Lincoln Chaffe. Two more votes are needed for the measure to pass the Senate. The Senate holdouts are concerned about waiving so-called “pay/go” rules for a one-year extension of budget cuts. The budget bill sets a fiscal 2005 discretionary spending cap of \$821.4 billion; without the bill only \$814 billion – the same as fiscal year 2004 – can be appropriated. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/060804cdpm1.htm>

**Energy tax package passes Senate** (Oklahoman/AP 5/12/2004) – The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly approved a \$14 billion package of tax breaks for the energy industry as part of a corporate tax bill. Supporters claim that tax provisions will spur domestic energy production, but critics say the tax structure is aimed at long-term production and will not affect short-term needs. Senator John McCain (R-AZ) called the subsidies a “shameless scam” to benefit oil and gas industries. The bill includes \$9 billion in tax incentives for the oil and gas industry, and other provisions to encourage the development of clean coal technology and renewable fuels. The measure also contains price supports for a \$20 billion pipeline to carry gas from Alaska’s North Slope, incentives for energy efficient homes and appliances, and a tax credit of up to \$2,000 for purchase of hybrid automobiles. The bill heads to a Senate-House conference committee.

**First responders grant formula debated** (Government Executive 6/22/2004) – The first skirmish between competing bills on the homeland security grant program was fought in the late hours in the House of Representatives. The two competing bills, one by Homeland Security chairman Chris Cox (R-CA) and Jim Turner (D-TX) and the other by Transportation and Infrastructure chairman Don Young (R-AK), are set to go to the floor in early July. The Cox and Turner bill would allocate funds based on threats, vulnerabilities, and risk assessments, although maintaining a minimum funding level for each state. Young’s bill, which is based on population, would broaden allocations to include all-hazard emergencies, including snowfalls and droughts. <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/062204cdam1.htm>

**Natural gas prices rise** (Oklahoman 6/4/2004) – Natural gas prices continued their rise, closing at \$6.19 per thousand cubic feet at the beginning of June. The price is up from \$5.38 in May and the recent low of \$4.67 in March. The price is about 14% higher than one year ago. Price increases, which are unusual for this time of year, represent a combination of decreased returns on drilling operations and higher oil prices. While drilling has increased 40% in the past two years, production has remained level. Nonetheless, analysts expect that reserves should be full before the wintertime drawdown. Analysts expect prices to remain above \$5 through the summer, and could rise higher if there is a hot summer.

**Labor Department reports productivity gains** (Oklahoman/AP 5/7/2004) – The first quarter of 2004 posted a 3.5% gain in productivity, according to the U.S. Labor Department. The gain is up one point from the previous quarter and matched analysts' expectations. Meanwhile, higher energy costs are cutting into discretionary budgets. Eight of ten discount retailers missed earnings expectations in April, and many employees remain worried about job stability. Same-store sales improved 4.4% from April 2003, below expectations of a five percent increase. March sales figures had been more optimistic, showing a 1.8% increase over February with strong gains in cars, clothing, furniture and building and garden supplies. Job growth, tax refunds, and low interest rates have helped spur consumer spending, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the U.S. economy.

**Deficit up \$56 billion from last year** (Government Executive 6/7/2004) – The Congressional Budget Office estimates a \$347 billion deficit for the first eight months of fiscal 2004, up \$56 billion from the same time last year. Corporate tax receipts increased \$30 billion from the previous year and social insurance taxes increased by \$12 billion, but individual income tax receipts declined by \$16 billion. The net \$24 billion increase in revenues were offset by a \$80 billion increase in outlays.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/060704cdpm2.htm>

**\$43 trillion in unfunded costs** (Washington Times 4/16/2004) – David M. Walker, chief of the General Accounting Office, warned that unless everything is laid on the table, the U.S. government will go into insolvency by 2040. Walker estimated that \$43 trillion in Social Security, Medicare, and other retirement benefits has been promised to baby boomers that is not covered by existing resources. The trust fund, he said, is a misnomer; most of those funds have already been allocated. “We have to stop digging [and] provide discipline” said Mr. Walker. In addition to retirement programs, Mr. Walker urged a close examination of defense, homeland security, the tax system and the spiraling cost of government health care benefits.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/business/20040415-105755-3366r.htm>

**Conservation programs face cuts** (Oklahoman/AP 6/16/2004) – More than \$25 million may be cut from the watershed dam rehabilitation program for fiscal year 2005. This year, the program, designed to rehabilitate thousands of aging small dams used for upstream flood control, received \$55 million, but the new budget reduces that to \$30 million. In addition, costs of other conservation programs are soaring. The Conservation Security Program, which provides financial incentives for land stewardship, was estimated to cost \$2 billion per year, but new estimates suggest the total could be between \$5 and \$10 billion per year.

**Governors endorse drought system** (Western Governors Association 6/21/2004) – The Western Governors Association endorsed a plan for a National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) at their annual meeting in Santa Fe. NIDIS would integrate existing data related to drought, supplement existing data sources where necessary and feasible, and provide tools for local access to real-time drought information. The plan’s development was funded in partnership between the WGA and NOAA. Governor Judy Martz of Montana noted that “the nation has policies for tornadoes and floods, we need a national policy for drought that can work to provide needed assistance to farmers and ranchers.” The governors also endorsed legislation aimed at creating a national policy for drought (HR 2871 / S 1454). The NIDIS plan is posted on the WGA website, [www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org).  
<http://www.westgov.org/wga/press/drought.htm>

**Thirty-one states exceed air quality standards** (EPA 4/15/2004) – The Environmental Protection Agency identified areas in 31 states that do not meet health standards for ground-level ozone. The 474 counties that did not meet standards represent only 15% of the total number of counties in the U.S., but include 159 million people. The status is partly a result of changed standards, based on new research on the relationship between ozone and human health. New requirements are based on a lower-level exposure over an eight-hour period, replacing the one-hour standards in place since 1979. Areas not meeting standards must prepare a plan to reduce ground-level ozone. Ozone-control measures that may be required include stricter controls on emissions from industrial facilities, planning requirements for transportation sources, or gasoline vapor recovery controls. EPA plans to work with states and local governments to develop innovative approaches to meeting the new standard. In addition, more stringent rules on Nonroad Diesel vehicles (such as construction vehicles), including measures to cut sulfur levels in diesel fuel by more than 99 percent, will help cities meet attainment goals.  
<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/b1ab9f485b098972852562e7004dc686/f2673d2323be58b385256e77005aa9af?OpenDocument>

**Environmental data goes online** (Stateline 6/16/2004) – The Environmental Protection Agency has a new operational web-based system that allows states to share information about air and water pollution. Fifteen states participate in the Exchange Network, and the EPA expects to have 35 states enrolled by year’s end. The site provides a common database, developed over a five-year period through the Environmental Council of the States, that allows easy input and retrieval and common reporting methods. Already, states are realizing significant savings over labor-intensive paper-based processing systems that they have replaced.  
<http://www.stateline.org/stateline/?pa=story&sa=showStoryInfo&id=379062>

**Legislation would rate agency performance** (Government Executive 5/7/2004) – Legislation proposed by Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), S. 1668, would require discretionary spending programs at civilian agencies to be rated, with those determined to be wasteful or duplicative eliminated. The legislation has found favor with OMB, which has long sought to tie agency performance more closely with budgets. The bill would establish a Commission on the Accountability and Review of Federal Agencies (CARFA). CARFA would include, among other measures, the PART evaluations conducted by OMB each year, which rate a sampling of federal programs as effective, moderately effective, adequate, ineffective, or results not demonstrated. CARFA would operate much as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, in which lawmakers would vote on elimination of programs, without amendments.  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0504/050704a1.htm>

**Grants.gov goes operational** (Government Executive 6/24/2004) – Grants.gov, the online source for locating information and applying for government grants, is moving from a development to a utilization phase. As part of the transition, funding for the program will be based on each agency’s grants listed through the website. Funding for development has come from 11 agencies, but now all 26 agencies that post on the site will contribute. Funding is based on a three-tier system, with those issuing the least in grants paying significantly less than those posting the most. The site has listed 3,000 grant announcements, and 115 were available for electronic application as of May 21. More than 340 applications have been submitted through the website. Grants.gov, along with the IRS’s e-file project, are the only two e-government initiatives to have reached their original goals, according to the GAO.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/062404e1.htm>

**e-government levels off** (Government Executive 5/4/2004) – As is typical with any innovation cycle, rapid progress in e-government has begun to level off. According to Accenture, a consulting and technology services firm, the leveling-off is part of a global trend. In order to move forward, countries need to reassess priorities and craft new action plans. The United States effort was largely one of putting federal services on the Internet. The challenge now is to develop “high-performance government,” one in which individuals may conduct transactions rather than merely finding information. Leadership for such effort will need to come from Cabinet officials and federal managers.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0504/050404d1.htm>

**States may restrict outsourcing** (Oklahoman 4/23/2004) – Legislators in 35 states are considering restricting or banning outsourcing of government jobs. In Michigan, Minnesota, and North Carolina, governors have issued executive orders to restrict outsourcing, and North Carolina recently appropriated \$1.2 million to bring back services that had been outsourced to India via an Arizona-based company. Governors of Michigan and Minnesota issued orders that restricted outsourcing to jobs based within the state or the United States.

**SEVIS improves after rocky start** (Government Executive 6/21/2004) – The Homeland Security department’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System has made great strides in reducing the number of user complaints. During its launch in early 2003, more than 20 critical and high-priority system change requests were made in the first six months. From July – December 2003, only two such changes were requested. Other indicators, including system availability, response time, capacity, and resource usage, show the system requirements are being met. The SEVIS staff accomplished this through increased staffing and training of the Help Desk, use of new software, and regular meetings between the department and educational representatives. Most of the early problems have been fixed, and educational organizations note overall program performance has improved. The biggest issue remaining seems to be the Help Desk, in which, despite increased staffing, there are still communications problems between the staff and users.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/062104e1.htm>

**Homeland Security alerts to be carried on weather radio** (NOAA 6/17/2004) – NOAA Weather Radio will now carry all-hazards alerts and warnings from Homeland Security, supplementing FEMA’s Emergency Alert System. With the new capability, Homeland Security can reach more than 97 percent of the United States territory, including broadcast receivers located in emergency operations centers, public sites, and workplaces.  
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jun04/noaa04-056.html>

**Classified secrets increase 25 percent** (Government Executive 4/27/2004) – The executive branch classified 25% more documents last year, according to the Information Security Oversight Office in its annual report. The report finds that many of the 14 million new secrets are classified unnecessarily, impeding national security efforts.  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042704td2.htm>

**Stevens tops in “Pig Book” – again** (Government Executive 4/7/2004) – Ted Stevens (R-AK), Senate Appropriations Chairman, topped the list in the “Pig Book” ([http://www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports\\_pigbook2004](http://www.cagw.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reports_pigbook2004)), an annual listing of state expenditures produced by the Citizens Against Government Waster. Alaska received a total of \$524 million in FY04, or about \$808 per person, 26 times the national per capita average of \$31. Hawaii ranked second, with Daniel Inouye (D-HI) bringing in \$494 million, about \$393 per capita. New Jersey dropped from 42<sup>nd</sup> place last year to last on this year’s list, receiving \$101 million, or about \$11.07 per capita. Stevens was also criticized for a \$2 million appropriation to improve recreation in North Pole Alaska, a city of 1,570. The single largest project was a \$50 million indoor rain forest in Coralville, IA, home to Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA). The total cost of the project is expected to be \$225 million. Robert Byrd (D-WV), whose ability to bring home funds to his state are legendary, was “only” able to round up \$238 million, or about \$132 per person, placing him at number 5 on the list. [*Note: Oklahoma moved from 33<sup>rd</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> on the list, with \$45.51 per capita spending totaling \$159.8 million.*]  
<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/040704cdpm2.htm>

**Kansas land run?** (myway.com 3/23/2004) – Several towns in Kansas are offering free land, hoping to lure new residents to dwindling rural communities. The incentive is based on homesteading days of the 1800s, in which much of the Great Plains was settled. The town of Marquette purchased 50 acres of farmland, and divided it into 80 lots, valued around \$8,000 each. In the past year, 20 of those lots have been given away, with four \$100,000 homes constructed and six others set to begin. For the town, the added population is good news for the local school; 26 more children are moving in with the families, adding to the 127 total elementary school population for the town. In addition, each house is expected to generate \$1,000 in tax revenue for a town with an annual budget of about \$350,000. In many rural communities across the Great Plain, population is aging, as younger people move to urban areas in search of work. Keeping local institutions, such as schools, restaurants, and the downtown business district alive has proven challenging for many such communities.  
<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20040323/D81G8K700.html>

## AGENCY NEWS

**NASA reorganization set for August 1** (CNN 6/24/2004) – Effective August 1, NASA will divide its strategic offices into four “Mission Directorates”: aeronautic research, science, exploration systems, and space operations. In addition, it will establish a chief safety and mission assurance officer, who will report directly to the Administrator. NASA’s focus is also shifting toward the moon and mars, with increased reliance upon the private sector space industry for non-manned space responsibilities. The new focus is in line with the President’s Vision for Space Exploration, outlined in January. Goals include retiring the space shuttle by 2010, establishing a lunar program with a manned base by 2020, and preparing for a manned mission to Mars. The new alignment does not include converting its research centers into federally-funded research and development centers.

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/space/06/24/nasa.recs.cnn/index.html>

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/062804bd1.htm>

**Commission urges cabinet status for NASA** (Government Executive 6/16/2004) – The President’s Commission on Moon, Mars and Beyond proposes elevating management of NASA to the cabinet level and turning its ten field installations into federally-funded research and development centers. The report, “A Journey to Inspire, Innovate and Discover” (see link on OCS News Summary page) offers 15 recommendations that would guide NASA over the next 40 years. Recommendations range from organizational improvements to establishing a permanent oversight council.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/061604b1.htm>

**Crawford named to lead NOAA effort** (NOAA 6/22/2004) – The National Weather Service has appointed Oklahoma Climatological Survey Director and State Climatologist Ken Crawford to lead implementation of a national integrated surface observing system. Among his duties will be modernization of the national cooperative observing system and developing a national mesonet. Ken Crawford is perhaps best known for his work in establishing the Oklahoma Mesonet, “arguably the finest meteorological system of its kind in the world”, according to The University of Oklahoma’s vice president for research, T.H. Lee Williams. Prior to his taking the helm of the Oklahoma Climatological Survey, Crawford had a 30-year career with the National Weather Service, including area manager for Oklahoma.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jun04/noaa04-063.html>

**Corps focuses on selected projects** (Government Executive 4/12/2004) – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is re-focusing efforts over the next five years in three areas: improvement of navigation channels on inland waterways, reduction of flood and coastal storm damage, and environmental protection and restoration. Corps officials said they will ask Congress to stop funding projects outside of these main mission areas, and to rescind navigation projects with “extremely low commercial use.” They will also focus on completing existing construction work before taking on new projects. The Corps also plans to revise performance measures in order to rate and rank projects in each of the nine civil divisions. The full strategic plan can be downloaded at [http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/hot\\_topics/cw\\_strat.pdf](http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/hot_topics/cw_strat.pdf).

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/041204a1>.



**Homeland Security creates independent research center** (Government Executive 4/28/2004) – The Department of Homeland Security selected Analytic Services Inc. to operate an independent research and analysis center staffed with science and technology experts. The center will have a staff of 120, drawn from academia, that will conduct studies related to evaluating systems and networks, reviewing federal security initiatives, assessing operations, advanced technologies and resources, and conducting field-operation analysis. The center, which will operate “at the highest levels of classification,” will not interact with industry unless it is part of the Homeland Security agency’s request.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042704td1.htm>

**Homeland Security merges offices** (Government Executive 4/28/2004) – The Homeland Security Department plans to consolidate its Office of Domestic Preparedness and its Office of State and Local Government Coordination. The consolidation is expected to ease oversight burdens and improve resource allocations. For states, the single office provides a “one-stop-shop” for access to grants and streamlines activities to correspond with state strategic plans. The biggest challenge for the new office is to address Congress’ concerns that funding is allocated based on a congressionally-mandated formula rather than on risk assessment.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042804c1.htm>

**Bio-terrorism directive released** (Government Executive 4/29/2004) – Secretaries Tommy Thompson (Health and Human Services), Tom Ridge (Homeland Security) and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz (Defense) announced a new presidential directive that delineates roles and responsibilities for federal agencies in event of a bioterrorist attack in the U.S. or overseas. Included in the directive are “push packages” that can deliver supplies to any medical facility within ten hours and a \$118 FY05 request to fund and expand the BioWatch surveillance program, a network of environmental sensors designed to detect biological agents.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042904gsn1.htm>

**OPM pushes on-the-spot hiring** (Government Executive 6/11/2004) – Office of Personnel Management Director Kay Coles James has been publicly promoting hiring reforms within the federal government. Among the tools she favors is on-the-spot hiring. James said agencies should come to job fairs prepared to make conditional employment offers, and not just to provide information about their agency. OPM officials have criticized agencies for not taking advantage of existing personnel flexibilities. John Palguta, from the Partnership for Public Service, said that direct hiring was useful, but cautioned that private companies invest a lot of time and effort in hiring, and rarely hire on the basis of a single meeting. Rather, he said, they maintain close ties to top universities and research candidates before making offers.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/061104d1.htm>

**Federal agencies fare well in job competitions** (Government Executive 2/6/2004) – In the three years since competitive sourcing became a mantra in federal government, a trend is clear: most of the time, the feds win. Civil servants have proven effective at trimming budgets to the bare necessity in order to compete – and win – their jobs. To date, private contractors have yet to see a windfall. The Forest Service retained 2,187 of 2,474 jobs put up for competition and NRCS retained an incredible 1,200 of the 1,206 jobs bid by that agency. Some agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health, have had to cut staff in order to compete effectively. However, observers note that there have been few large competitions – the kind in which private-sector contractors would invest a lot of time and planning.

<http://www.govexec.com/features/0204/0204s3.htm>

**Noncompetitive contracts on the rise** (Government Executive 6/1/2004) – In fiscal 2003, federal agencies awarded more than one-third of the \$290 billion in federal procurements without full competition. The minority staff of the House Government Reform Committee claimed that the administration’s emphasis on contracting services has led to loss of oversight, eroding safeguards on competition and supervision. Three years ago, 33% of procurements were awarded without competition, a figure which rose to 37% last year. Three-quarters of the noncompetitive grants were defense-related. In addition to the noncompetitive contracts, pre-negotiated contracts for services are pervasive.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0604/060104a1.htm>

**Performance requirements may be revolutionary** (Government Executive 4/19/2004) – A new position of Senior Performance Official would create a person in each agency whose job it is to assess agency performance, assure consistency between organizations performance measures, and change organizational cultures. The SPO would be responsible for evaluating the overall agency’s performance in a given year, and then assess compensation issues for the agencies’ executives. In order to make such decisions, the SPO would use data from the Government Performance and Results Act, the Performance Assessment Rating Tool, and other measures of organizational performance. By tying compensation to agency performance, it is hoped such an individual would foster an organizational culture more focused on demonstrating “measurable and observable” results.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/041904ol.htm>

**OMB emphasizes property management** (Government Executive 2/10/2004) – A new Executive Order requires agencies to designate a senior real property officer to oversee federal assets. The agency officials will sit on a new property council administered by OMB. The initiative is designed to better manage federal properties, excluding national parks and Indian trust lands. For example, the Department of Defense spends more than \$3 billion annually to maintain buildings not currently in use. However, to make the most effective use of resources, agencies will need more flexibility, such as the ability to lease unused space or purchase facilities outright. For these, legislative action is likely required. HR 2548, approved by the House Government Reform Committee, addresses such issues.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/021004a1.htm>

## **STATE & LOCAL**

**Legislature wraps up session** (Oklahoman 5/29/2004) – The state legislature wrapped up its 2004 session, one in which several significant pieces of legislation were advanced. During the session, legislatures addressed tort reforms, teacher pay raises, tax cuts, a tobacco tax increase for funding health-care programs, and a gaming proposal. Republican leaders did not feel the session was as productive, however, noting that issues including workers' compensation reform were not addressed and other issues including tort reform were not strong enough. The next legislature will feature many new faces, as 40 legislators are prohibited from running for re-election due to term limits. Speaker of the House Larry Adair (D-Stilwell) is among those who cannot run again.

**State puts \$200 million in rainy day fund** (Oklahoman 6/16/2004) – A trend of higher-than-expected tax receipts has garnered close to \$200 million for the state's Constitutional Reserve fund, often called the Rainy Day fund. When revenues exceed budget allocations, the excess goes into a fund that can be utilized in times of economic downturn. The fund balance is currently \$136,000, following drawdown during the recession. Income and sales taxes grew substantially in May, as compared to May 2003, while gross production taxes and other sources declined. The net revenue increase for May was 3.3% over the previous year and 4.2% greater than budget expectations.

**Candidates file for office** – Candidates for elected office in Oklahoma filed in early June for spots on the summer's and fall ballots. Ten people filed for the vacated U.S. Senate position, now held by Don Nickles, including U.S. Representative Brad Carson, State Insurance Commissioner Carroll Fisher, former Oklahoma City Mayor Kirk Humphreys, State Corporation Commissioner Bob Anthony, and former U.S. Representative Tom Coburn. Representatives Frank Lucas and Tom Cole drew only independent-candidate opposition, and Coles' opponent's candidacy was ordered stricken. In local state senate races, Jonathan Nichols (R-Norman) is being challenged by Democrat Lisa Pryor for the District 15 seat. District 16, held by Cal Hobson (D-Lexington), is not up for election this year. Norman-area House races include:

- District 44 (Central Norman): Incumbent Democrat Bill Nations faces Republican challenger and 3-term Norman City Councilman Richard Stawicki and Independent E.Z. Million;
- District 45 (East Norman): Incumbent Republican Thad Balkman faces Democrat challengers M. Estelle Cash and David Birdwell;
- District 46 (West Norman): Incumbent Republican Doug Miller faces a party challenge from Jim Tidmore
- District 53 (North Norman / Moore): Incumbent Carolyn Coleman retires due to term limits, leaving an open-seat challenge between Democrat Troy Green of Norman and Republicans Bill Waterman, Randy Terrill, Mike Klinlesmith, Anthony Sykes, and Christi Spencer, all of Moore.

The only other statewide race on the ballot this fall is for Corporation Commissioner, in which Incumbent Denise Bode (R-Oklahoma City) is being challenged by Democrat John Wylie from Oologah. In addition, there will be numerous state questions on the ballot, including implementation of a state lottery, casino gaming, and an increase in tobacco taxes. For a full listing of candidates and other election information, [Candidate Filings 2004.pdf](#), in the "Useful Resources" section of this publication's webpage. Additional information is on the Oklahoma State Election Board website, <http://www.state.ok.us/~elections/>.

**FY 2005 budget estimate certified** (Oklahoman 6/17/2004) – The state Board of Equalization recertified the \$4.8 billion budget estimate for fiscal year 2005, leaving the previous estimate unchanged.

**Bond issue for endowed chairs** (Oklahoman 4/20/2004) – House Bill 1904, signed by Governor Henry, will provide \$52 million for endowed chair programs at Oklahoma colleges and universities. The funds are match for contributions already received, some of which were about to expire.

**Higher Education bond issue in trouble** (Oklahoman 5/1/2004) – Governor Henry asked university presidents to put together a smaller bond issue for this year, but Higher Education Chancellor Paul Risser replied that the \$500 million request should not be modified. The bond issue would cover 44 projects to build or renovate classrooms and performing arts halls and 11 science labs. OU President David Boren said the smallest the bond issue should be is \$300 million. With an already-complicated November ballot, the bond issue may wait until next year.

**Water planning bill dies in conference** – Senate Bill 903, the Oklahoma Water Resources Development Act, died in conference, despite passing the Senate and House with virtually no opposition. The Act would have created 11 regional groups, based on sub-state planning districts, for guidance on the state comprehensive water plan. The law mirrored those passed in Texas and other states. The Oklahoma Water Resources Board's Mike Matthis said the bill would eliminate the state's "top-down approach to water planning." The first phase of the project would have required \$6.5 million, a sum which apparently could not be found late in the legislative session.

**Telecommunication task force named** (Oklahoman 6/20/2004) – Members of a task force to study telecommunications deregulation were named by Senator Cal Hobson. The task force must complete a report no later than November 30. Members are Senators Jay Paul Gumm (D-Durant) and Richard Leblance (D-Hartshorne); Oklahoma corporation commissioner Jeff Cloud; Tom Riley of the Chickasaw Telephone Company; and Dave Bialis, vice president and general manager of Cox Communications.

**Republicans name floor leader** (Oklahoman 6/20/2004) – The Oklahoma Senate Republican Caucus named Senator Glenn Coffee (R-Oklahoma City) as their floor leader for the next session. Coffee has served in the Oklahoma state Senate since 1998 and has been the caucus chairman and assistant Republican Leader. His assistant floor leaders will be Scott Pruitt (R-Broken Arrow) and Owen Laughlin (R-Woodward). Randy Brogdon (R-Owasso) and Nancy Riley (R-Tulsa) will serve as whips and Jonathan Nichols (R-Norman) will be the Republican Caucus leader.

**Governor names new health secretary** (Oklahoman 5/28/2004) – Governor Brad Henry appointed Dr. Terry Cline to replace Tom Adelson as Secretary of Health. Adelson, who resigned in order to run for a vacant state Senate seat, led governor Henry's health care initiative, which was adopted by the legislature this session. Cline has been commissioner of mental health and substance abuse services. His previous experience includes a clinical instructor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard University and work with mental health organizations in Washington, D.C.

**Norman city manager resigns** (Oklahoman 6/16/2004) – Andy Anderson announced his resignation as Norman’s City Manager in order to take a similar position in Bend, Oregon. The resignation becomes effective August 15. Anderson, a Chicago native, had previously served as city manager in Medford, OR, for ten years. He has been in Norman since August 2000.

**Bode named president of power pool** (Oklahoman 4/27/2004) – Oklahoma Corporation Commission Chairman Denise Bode was named as chair of the new Southwest Power Pool Regional State Committee. Oklahoma is one of seven states in the regional power pool. Other members include Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico and Texas. The Power Pool is an association of state regulatory commissions, utilities, independent generators, and other industry players. The Southwest Power Pool, which coordinates activities to maintain grid reliability, is seeking more regulatory authority as a Regional Transmission Organization.

**Highway cameras contract awarded** (Oklahoman 5/4/2004) – The Oklahoma Transportation Commission awarded a \$1.5 million contract for installation of cameras along I-44 from I-240 north to the Kilpatrick Turnpike. The cameras are designed to monitor road conditions and help respond to accidents; they will not be used for traffic enforcement. The corridor carries 140,000 vehicles per day, according to OTC.

**Oklahoma receives \$32 million for homeland security** (Oklahoman 4/21/2004) – Oklahoma received \$32 million in the most recent round of federal homeland security grants. About half of the award will be used for improving interoperable communications, including hardware and software upgrades, installing radio towers, and other provisions. Other funds will be used for Citizen Corps programs and Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention programs. Oklahoma did not receive any of the urban-area funding, which was allocated to 50 cities, some smaller than Oklahoma City or Tulsa according to the latest census figures.

**Oklahoma outpaces region in economic growth** (Oklahoman 5/4/2004) – The April Business Condition Index surged to 82.3 in Oklahoma, outpacing the Mid-America region for the third consecutive month. The Index, which ranges from 0 to 100, is a measure of economic growth, with values greater than 50 indicating an expanding economy over the next three to six months. Analysts expect Oklahoma’s employment figures to continue to improve, despite the loss of 500 jobs due to Citgo’s relocation from Tulsa to Houston. Manufacturing employment showed strong growth, after several years of contraction. Production, new orders, inventories, and delivery time all posted gains, although prices-paid also increased to a 10-year high, indicating increasing inflationary pressures. The Index is produced by Creighton University’s Economic Forecasting Group. The Group also expects the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates as soon as June.

**Oklahoma’s electricity market continues growth** (Oklahoman Letter by Denise Bode 4/18/2004) – Oklahoma is situated for further growth in its electricity production and market, through increased domestic production and new wind generation capacity. Energy costs in Oklahoma are the eighth lowest for consumers and affordable electricity is a strong magnet for economic growth. Oklahoma has few siting requirements for new generation or transmission facilities, and air quality permits are handled by a single agency. The development of a regional transmission organization may alleviate some of the problems of grid congestion, with an estimated \$1 billion needed to improve the electric grid.

**Wheat crop gets good marks, despite drought** (Oklahoman 5/8/2004; 5/13/2004; 5/20/2004; 5/29/2004) – Despite ongoing drought across much of Oklahoma’s wheat belt, the crop led Oklahoma Wheat Commission executive director Mark Hodges to state that he was “extremely cautiously optimistic” for an average yield. The crop was expected to yield 154.8 million bushels, down from last year’s 179 million bushels and below earlier estimates of 172 million bushels. Despite the downward trend in overall production, test weights have remained at 60 pounds per bushel or more, with low moisture content. Many fields have suffered from dry land foot rot, a condition in which grain heads do not fill. The disease is not apparent until the later stages of wheat development. While yields have varied field-to-field across much of northern Oklahoma, the Panhandle has done consistently well, surpassing its long-term average. Rainfall at key times in the fall and early spring helped to produce the best crop for the region since 2001, according to extension specialist Rick Kochenower. National estimates are for a 9% decrease in overall wheat production.

**Monitoring plan set** (Oklahoman 5/1/2004) – Oklahoma and Arkansas officials agreed on a plan to establish 30 monitoring sites along the Arkansas River tributaries, including a dozen sites along Oklahoma’s scenic rivers. The sites will monitor several pollutants, including phosphorus. Details will be worked out by “technical folks” with a plan ready for approval at the Arkansas River Compact Commission meeting in June.

**Tar Creek buyout approved** (Oklahoman 6/3/2004) – Governor Henry signed legislation that appropriates funds for targeted buyouts in the Tar Creek Superfund site. House Bill 1490 provides up to \$3 million for the state to purchase homes of families with children under five years of age in the 40-square-mile superfund site, including the towns of Picher and Cardin. As many as 100 families may qualify. Governor Henry signed the bill in a ceremony in Picher.

**Concern over forest thinning** (Oklahoman 6/1/2004) – State Senator Jeff Rabon (D-Hugo) is leading an effort to stop the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife from thinning trees in the McCurtain County Wilderness Area. The effort began in 1992, and was aimed at reducing hardwood growth in an area that was once pristine pine forests. Decades of fire suppression allowed hardwood trees to encroach upon the forest, shutting out light for pines and threatening habitats of the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Recently, some sportsmen’s groups noticed the cutting, and began a campaign to stop it. The question of whether the state wildlife department has the legal authority to thin forests in the wilderness area is headed to the state Attorney General, who will be asked to address a 1968 decision that prohibited any timber cutting within the wilderness area.

**OCAST President indicted** (Oklahoman 6/2/2004) – William Arthur Sibley, president of the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology, was charged by a grand jury with 22 felony fraud counts in relation to a ghost employee. Sibley is charged with approving time sheets for Faye Worthen, former director of administration and finance, which included 885.5 hours that she never worked. Worthen was indicted in April. Joellyn McCormick, assistant Attorney General, said that Sibley has been cooperative, voluntarily provided testimony, and took corrective action even before being called by the grand jury. McCormick said he thinks the grand jury was sending a message to state agencies by holding Sibley accountable. [*Note: Sibley resigned as executive director on June 15. Sheri Stickley, a longtime OCAST employee, was named interim executive director.*]

**Interim OSU dean selected** (Oklahoman 5/28/2004) – Ed Miller, associate dean of OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, has been selected to serve as interim dean and director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences, effective July 1, until a permanent replacement is chosen. Miller succeeds Sam Curl, who will retire on June 30. Curl has been dean since 1997.

**Tulsa picks new president** (Oklahoman/AP 6/9/2004) – Steadman Upham was chosen as the next president of the University of Tulsa. Upham, who is currently president at Claremont, California, Graduate University, succeeds Bob Lawless, who has announced his retirement effective July 16. Roger Blais, provost and vice president for academic affairs, will serve as interim president until Upham arrives in October. Upham holds a doctorate in anthropology from Arizona State University.

**Test scores improve** (Oklahoman 6/11/2004) – Oklahoma City schools showed marked improvement in 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade test scores, especially among the lower-performing schools. Oklahoma City Public Schools Superintendent Bob Moore added staff at low-performing schools this last year, which may have been a factor in the improvement. For the district overall, 62 percent of fifth-graders scored satisfactory or advanced in math, compared with 54% last year. Eighth-graders improved from 45% to 56% satisfactory or advanced. Reading scores increased 3%, to 50%, among 5<sup>th</sup>-graders and 12%, to 58% satisfactory or advanced, among 8<sup>th</sup>-graders. All but four of the district's 62 schools showed gains in at least one subject area. Westwood, one of the schools on the state's school improvement list for the past four years, posted 5<sup>th</sup>-grade student scores of 76% satisfactory or better in reading and 96% in math., compared to 28% and 76%, respectively, last year. Westwood used pre- and post-test each week to monitor student improvement, with those failing to show progress then receiving one-on-one attention. Volunteer mentors at Horace Mann helped almost triple fifth-grade reading scores. Each of the 250 students is paired with a mentor.

**Oklahoma joins National LambdaRail** (Oklahoman 6/4/2004) – Oklahoma is the most recent state to join National LambdaRail Inc., a high-speed fiber-optic network that connects computing centers across the United States. The connection will allow weather researchers in Norman, for example, to conduct real-time applications using supercomputers in Pittsburgh. OneNet will provide access throughout Oklahoma, with a connection to the national network in Tulsa. The connection should be operational by the end of the year. Oklahoma paid \$5 million to join the consortium. Funding comes from public and private sources, including WilTel Communications, OneNet, and the two major state universities.

**Rural broadband service** (Oklahoman 5/6/2004) – Two Oklahoma telephone companies will receive \$10.5 million to establish rural broadband service. Pioneer Long Distance will receive \$5.33 million to establish connections in Alfalfa, Beckham, Custer, Grant, Major, Washita, Woods and Woodward Counties. Central Cellular will receive \$5.13 million to establish services in Lincoln County, including Stroud.

**Oklahoma second in school Internet access** (Oklahoman 5/6/2004) – Oklahoma ranks second nationally in the ratio of students to Internet-connected classroom computers. South Dakota led the way, with Oklahoma just behind at 5.8 students per Internet-connected computer. The national average is 8.4 students. The trade publication *Education Week* found 99 percent of Oklahoma schools have Internet access, with 87% of those having high-speed connections. Access, however, does not necessarily translate into effectiveness. Oklahoma received poor marks for teachers' abilities; at least half of the teachers at 23% of Oklahoma schools were classified as "beginners", compared to the national average of 18%. Oklahoma does not require technology courses or testing as part of teacher licensing, nor does it offer financial incentives for administrators and teachers to use technology. State education officials said a partnership with The University of Oklahoma provides training for administrators to organize school data, and more than 8,000 teachers have accessed Passport, a state-operated database of lesson plans.

**Senator Muegge to receive award** (Oklahoman 5/3/2004) – Former Oklahoma State Senator Paul Muegge will receive a John F. Kennedy Profiles in Courage Award from the Kennedy Library Foundation on May 24. The award is recognition for Muegge's efforts to regulate hog and poultry operations in Oklahoma. The award is given annually to public servants who stand up to strong opposition, based on President Kennedy's 1957 book about U.S. Senators who risked their careers for their beliefs. Muegge calls himself a reluctant environmentalist – someone who by nature of his position found himself at the center of a heated debate, and did the best he could to provide for continued growth while limiting potential damages to area residents.



## WEATHER & CLIMATE

**Earth Observation Summit meeting** (NOAA 4/19/2004) – Forty-seven countries and the European Commission met in Tokyo in late April for the first Earth Observation Summit. The meeting was designed to coordinate data-collection activities that will enable forecasters to improve predictions, scientists to better understand Earth systems, and open the door to many new applications of knowledge and technology. Members agreed to a ten-year implementation plan that will link systems together, enabling improved application of observations and information. The United States delegation included EPA Administrator Mike Leavitt; Dr. John H. Marburger, the president's science advisor; and NOAA Administrator Vice Adm. Conrad Lautenbacher. Lautenbacher co-chairs the Group on Earth Observations, along with representatives from the European Commission, Japan, and South Africa. Earth observations were also expected to be an agenda item at the G-8 meeting in June.

<http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2004/s2214.htm>

**Western Snowpack fails to live up to promise** (NRCS 4/7/2004) – After a good start to the season, a warm, dry March turned hopes into dust. Twenty-five percent of snow measurement stations in the Western United States posted record decreases of snowpack in March, resulting in many basins losing more than 20% of their expected April 1 snowpack. Snowpack provides about 75% of water supply in the West, meaning that most states are facing another year of drought. Seasonal runoff forecasts for most western streams and rivers declined by 10 to 50% from the March 1 forecasts.

<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/factpub/march-snowpack-www-v1.6.pdf>

**More hurricanes than normal forecasted for 2004** (NOAA 5/17/2004) – Forecasters at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration expect 12-15 tropical storms in the Atlantic this season, with 6-8 of them reaching hurricane strength and two to four becoming major hurricanes. Probabilistic forecasts give a 50% chance of an above-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season. Similar seasons averaged two or three landfalling hurricanes in the continental United States, and one or two hurricanes in the region around the Caribbean Sea. Last year, three tropical storms and three hurricanes affected the U.S., with Hurricane Isabel causing 17 deaths and more than \$3 billion in damages. Since 1995, all but the El Nino years of 1997 and 2002 have experienced an above-normal number of hurricanes. NOAA forecasters expect four or five tropical cyclones in the central Pacific, average for the area.

<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/may04/noaa04-047.html>

**NASA technology aiding weather forecasters** (NASA 4/28/2004) – New satellite information is being employed by the National Weather Service to improve short-term forecasts. “Adding NASA satellite data and model output to NOAA forecasts could lead to more confident seven-day severe local storm forecasts, better prediction of thunderstorm occurrence by three hours, and an increase in tornado warning lead times by 18 minutes,” said Dr. Marshall Shepherd, research meteorologist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. Satellite data being applied now includes surface wind data from QuikScat, rainfall data from the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission satellite, and NASA's new Aura satellite that provides temperature and moisture information. Data from multiple sources are being blended in the NASA-NOAA Joint Center for Satellite Data Assimilation, formed in 2002.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2004/h04-110.htm>

**Warm spring** (NOAA 6/18/2004) – The National Climatic Data Center said that Spring 2004 was the third warmest on record, dating back to 1895. All regions of the country were warmer than average in spring (March-May), with only Florida being near-normal. According to NCDC, Oklahoma and Kansas had their warmest spring on record. Most of the Western United States and Southeast were drier than normal, while the Rio Grande River valley, upper Midwest, and northeast were all above-normal. The Storm Prediction Center estimated that 500 tornadoes occurred across the United States in May, near the record 543 set just one year ago. [*Ed. Note: Data from the Oklahoma Mesonet show an average temperature for Spring in Oklahoma of 61.7 degrees, which places it 7<sup>th</sup> historically. NCDC data appear to show an average temperature of about 62.7 degrees, placing it above the record 62.5 degrees set in 1974. A comparison of Mesonet temperatures and cooperative observer temperatures showed only a 0.01 degree difference in statewide-averaged temperature over a ten-year period.*]  
<http://www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/releases2004/jun04/noaa04-059.html>

**Spring soil moisture indicator of summer precipitation** (National Academies 6/7/2004) – Antecedent soil moisture conditions appear to influence summer precipitation in the midlatitudes of continental North America, according to research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Paolo D’Odorico of the University of Virginia and Amilcare Porporato of Duke University modeled weather and soil moisture patterns, using two decades of rainfall and soil moisture data from Illinois. The researchers found that the atmosphere can get locked into a dry or wet state, with middle values unlikely, based on spring soil moisture conditions. The researchers conclude that evapotranspiration is affected by soil moisture, which then causes a feedback process into summer precipitation.  
<http://www.pnas.org/misc/archive060704.shtml#HL7>

**Greenhouse warming leads to wetter world** (CNN 5/12/2004) – Nearly 100 scientists in Australia released an annual statement on greenhouse warming, saying that as the world has warmed, it has also gotten wetter. The abundant carbon dioxide, they conclude, has fueled plant growth, including forests, farms, and grasslands, that has in turn absorbed significant volumes of greenhouse gases. Furthermore, the increased plant growth has increased atmospheric moisture, causing increased cloudiness and precipitation, which has led to decreased potential evaporation from soil and land-based water bodies.  
<http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/05/12/greenhouse.resilient.reut/index.html>

**Atlantic current weakens** (NASA 4/15/2004) – According to researchers at NASA’s Goodard Space Flight Center, the sub polar gyre, a current in the North Atlantic that runs counterclockwise from Ireland to Labrador, weakened during the 1990s, as compared to the previous two decades. The current, which is influenced by the North Atlantic Oscillation, failed to increase with the latest change in phase of the NAO. The sub-polar gyre takes 20 years to complete its route, and can be influenced by the paths of winter storms and buoyant fresh water from glacial melting and precipitation. During the 1990s, the researchers found that water in the Labrador Sea core of the gyre warmed, reducing the contrast between it and warmer southern latitudes, which consequently weakened the current.  
<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2004/h04-130.htm>

**Earthshine reflects climate change** (NASA 5/27/2004) – The reflection of Earth’s light off the dark side of the moon may give clues to climate variations. Over the last three years, the amount of light reflected toward space has increased, according to a NASA-funded study that appeared in the May 28 issue of *Science* (Reports: *Changes in Earth’s Reflectance over the Past Two Decades*). Combining earthshine data from Big Bear Solar Observatory with cloud data from satellites, the authors concluded that, contrary to expectations, the Earth’s surface may have been less cloudy in the 1980s and 1990s. The combined dataset showed a steady decrease in Earth’s albedo from 1984 to 2000, coincident with a measured rise in global mean temperatures. From 2001 to 2003, the Earth brightened to pre-1995 levels, which the authors associate with changes in cloud properties. Although the scientists have not attributed causes to these changes, they do note that the variations imply large shifts in Earth’s radiative budget.

<http://www.gsfc.nasa.gov/news-release/releases/2004/h04-170.htm>

**New mass extinction** (CNN/AP 3/18/2004) – A detailed study of butterflies and native plants, conducted in England, Scotland and Wales, shows that a new mass extinction may be ongoing. The Survey, conducted between 1988 and 1991, repeated an earlier study from 1968-1971, and is among the most comprehensive studies to date. Findings show a 71 percent population decline in 58 butterfly species, a 54 percent decline in avian population, and a 28 percent decline in native plant species, as compared to the earlier study. Biological scientists have increasingly been coming to the conclusion that the Earth is undergoing its sixth major extinction event in history. When compared with other studies, the common factor appears to be human. Through climate change and direct human action, many large animals and birds have already become extinct, nearly all correlated with the introduction of humans into new regions. The rates of extinction found in the UK study exceed those previously published. Biologists say the present mass extinction began approximately 50,000 years ago.

<http://www.cnn.com/2004/TECH/science/03/18/wildlife.gone.ap/index.html>

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

**Academies seeks feedback on presidential appointments process** (National Academies 6/25/2004) – The National Academies Committee on Ensuring the Best Science and Technology Presidential and Federal Advisory Committee Appointments (perhaps the longest committee name in history) solicits comments on the issue of appointment of scientists, engineers, and health professionals. In particular, the committee wants feedback on barriers to appointing the most-qualified candidates for science and technology presidential appointments and the selection process. Comments are due by July 1.

<http://www7.national-academies.org/cosepup/Callforcomments.html>

**OMB releases new rules on peer review** (National Academies 4/15/2004) – The Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulator Affairs revised its policies on peer review. The new rules state that the level of necessary peer review depends on the potential impact of the pertinent scientific information and exempts information that applies to urgent matters of health, safety, and national security. The changes follow criticism offered of the original draft guidelines. The guidelines and instructions on providing comments are on the OMB website, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/infopoltech.html#iq>. A copy of the document is also posted on this News Summary's website under "Useful Resources."

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/s04152004?OpenDocument>

**Senator challenges sampling technique** (Government Executive 5/11/2004) – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) challenged the USDA method of testing for mad cow disease. Under new rules, the USDA announced it would test between 201,000 and 268,000 cattle over 30 months of age, considered high-risk, and 20,000 younger cattle. Harkin said the plan is driven by how many cattle USDA wants to test rather than by statistical methodology required to reach accurate and reliable conclusions. Among those arguing for increased testing is Stanley Prusiner, the Nobel Prize-winning scientist who discovered the prior, the agent that causes the disease. Pruisner said that all cattle should be tested. Peter Fernandez, associate administrator of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said USDA officials consider Prusiner "a fine scientist and a fine businessman" – Prusiner markets his own BSE test kit.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0504/051104cdam1.htm>

**NCAR combines sensors and models to test detection systems** (NCAR news 4/23/2004) – The National Center for Atmospheric Research combined multiple computer models with advanced weather-sensing instrumentation in a month-long study of dispersion conditions near the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The study used a set of concentric computer models, each with different strengths, combined with an instrumented tethered balloon, Doppler radar, Lidars, and surface observing sites. Periodic releases of sulfur hexafluoride were used to test the detection capabilities of the instruments and models. [*Thanks to Fred Carr for the story.*]

<http://www.ucar.edu/communications/newsreleases/2004/pentagon.html>

**Technical innovation necessary for transportation** (Government Executive 4/20/2004) –In order to feed new technology into operations, the FAA has partnered with universities and colleges to research new technologies for addressing issues like aircraft noise, metrics and security. A senior officials said the FAA would like to award a contract for \$2 million over three years to develop sensors that detect hazardous air pathogens in aircraft. In addition, an interagency group, including the FAA, Homeland Security, NASA, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, is drafting a national aviation plan for the next 20 years.

<http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0404/042004tdpm1.htm>

**Ralph Cicerone to take the helm of the National Academy of Sciences** (National Academies 6/15/2004) – The Council of the National Academy of Sciences has unanimously approved the nomination of Ralph J. Cicerone, chancellor of the University of California, Irvine, for election as president of the Academy, to succeed Bruce Alberts on July 1, 2005. An atmospheric chemist, Cicerone was elected to the Academy in 1990 and has served on more than 40 NAS and National Research Council committees. In 2001, he chaired the landmark NRC study *Climate Change Science: An Analysis of Some Key Questions*, conducted at the request of the White House. The NAS membership will formally ratify its selection for president by ballot in December 2004.

[*Editors Comment: Dr. Cicerone obtained his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Illinois ... Go Illini!*]

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/06152004?OpenDocument>

**Academy chooses 72 new members** (National Academies 4/20/2004) – The National Academy of Sciences announced the election of 72 new members and 18 foreign associates in recognition of their distinguished and continuing achievements in original research. New members from the Big-12 schools include:

- **LAMBOWITZ, Alan M.;** chaired professor of molecular biology and director, Institute for Cellular and Molecular Biology, The University of Texas, Austin;
- **ZOGHBI, Huda Y.;** investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute; and professor, departments of pediatrics, neurology, neuroscience, and molecular and human genetics, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston

For a full list, see <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/04202004?OpenDocument>

**Education symposium information on the web** (National Academies 6/25/2004) – Audio and slide presentations from the National Academy of Engineering and National Research Council Center for Education's State Educators' Symposium on Technological Literacy is posted on the web, at <http://www.nae.edu/nae/naetech.nsf/weblinks/MKEZ-5XNHRY?OpenDocument>. The symposium brought together state education leaders in mathematics, science, assessment, and curriculum to discuss technological literacy and how technology can be used more broadly than simple use of computers in the classroom. The symposium was funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

**Academies library resources online** (National Academies 6/25/2004) - Resources from the National Academies' George E. Brown, Jr. library are now available to the public. Visitors are welcome to search its online catalog as well as look through current issues in the journal collection. [http://www7.national-academies.org/nrclibrary/Visitors\\_Guide.html](http://www7.national-academies.org/nrclibrary/Visitors_Guide.html)

## **REPORTS & STUDIES**

**Improving federal financing of academic research** (NASULGC March 2004) – A subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council released a list of 10 areas in which government agencies could change their policies to improve the efficiency of federal financing of academic research. The items under review focus on facilitating collaborative and multidisciplinary research, improving consistency of agency practices, and harmonizing accountability requirements.

[http://www.nasulgc.org/newsline/Newsline%2013.3\\_d1.pdf](http://www.nasulgc.org/newsline/Newsline%2013.3_d1.pdf)

**Report Lists Criteria for Evaluating K-12 Math Programs** (National Academies 5/18/2004) – Evaluations of mathematics curricula provide important information for educators, parents, students and curriculum developers, but those conducted to date on 19 specific curricula fall short of the scientific standards necessary to gauge overall effectiveness, says a new report from the National Academies' Mathematical Sciences Education Board. The report recommends a comprehensive, rigorous and scientifically valid evaluation strategy to determine the effectiveness of K-12 mathematics curricula. The report, “On Evaluating Curricular Effectiveness: Judging the Quality of K-12 Mathematics Evaluations,” is on the Academies website, <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/11025.html>

**National Research Effort Needed to Secure Water Supply** (National Academies 6/17/2004) – The United States should make a new commitment to water resources research to confront the increasingly severe water problems faced by all parts of the country, says a new report from the National Academies' Water Science and Technology Board. A new mechanism is needed to coordinate water research currently fragmented among nearly 20 federal agencies. In order to address competition for water among multiple interests and emerging challenges such as climate change and waterborne diseases, the committee recommends that an additional \$70 million in federal funding should be provided annually for water research, with the goal of improving the decision-making of institutions and better understanding challenges that lie ahead. The report notes that funding for water research has remained stagnant over the past 30 years, and that federal agencies and states tend to focus on short-term research. The report also recommends improvements in monitoring water conditions and levels over the long term. The report also says that a new entity is needed to coordinate water research at the national level, either as an existing interagency body, a neutral organization authorized by Congress, or a public-private group led by OMB. The report is on the Academies' website, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/11031.html>.

<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/0309092582?OpenDocument>

**Integrated planning for water projects** (National Academies 4/16/2004) – The National Research Council's Panel of River Basin and Coastal Systems Planning, issued a review of the Army Corps of Engineers water resources planning. The report notes problems inherent in integrated planning and the changing nature of the Corps mission, from large toward smaller projects. The report can be downloaded at <http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10970.html>. The Academy also has other recent publications on water management issues, including *Adaptive Management for Water Resources Project Planning* (<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10972.html>) and *Analytical Methods and Approaches for Water Resources Project Planning* (<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10973.html>).

**USGS outlines health of rivers** (USGS 5/17/2004) – The US Geological Survey released a series of 51 reports detailing the health of major river basins across the United States. Regional and national highlights are in a separate report, “Water Quality in the Nation’s Streams and Aquifers – Overview of Selected Findings, 1991-2001.” Generally, the USGS finds that rivers and streams are suitable for irrigation, supplying drinking water, and home and recreational uses. However, rivers continue to be challenged by pesticides, nutrients, metals, gasoline-related compounds and other contaminants. Urban areas are especially challenged by runoff of chemicals used on lawns and gardens, while rural areas showed high levels of herbicides. Although contamination from man-made chemicals was commonly found, contaminants were lower than EPA drinking-water standards. Over the past decade, the USGS identified land management practices that improved water quality in streams as well as land-use changes that had negative impacts. The individual reports are at <http://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/nawqasum/>.  
[http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public\\_affairs/press\\_releases/pr1882m.html](http://www.usgs.gov/public/press/public_affairs/press_releases/pr1882m.html)

**Engineering profession requires changes** (National Academies 5/17/2004) – “Future engineers must be able to acquire new knowledge quickly, be adaptable and engage emerging problems, and also be capable of informing public policy,” according to a statement by the National Academies of Sciences. Social, ethical, economic, legal, and political constraints all must be considered in planning projects, according to the committee. This will require changes in education and training, and recognition of the importance of public service. In addition international collaboration will require increased cultural awareness and diversity among the profession. The report, “The Engineer of 2020: Visions of Engineering in the New Century,” is available on the National Academies website, <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10999.html>.  
<http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news/nsf/isbn/0309091624?OpenDocument>

**TRB lists transportation titles** (National Academies 6/11/2004) – The Transportation Research Board of the National Academies has issued a flyer highlighting recent TRB titles related to highway management. Topics include guides, manuals, reports and studies for transportation researchers, professionals, and policy decision makers. The pdf of titles can be access from [http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurbs\\_detail.asp?id=3801](http://gulliver.trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=3801).

## **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 11/21/2003
- 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: Placed on Legislative Calendar, No. 514 (5/13/2004)
- Introduced: 6/2/2003 by Sen. Collins [ME]
- Committees: Reported Favorably (3/9/2004) by Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Placed on Senate Legislative Calendar.
- 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 – “21<sup>st</sup> 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.