

WASHINGTON NEWS

Rep. Boehlert Honored for Science, Engineering, and Technology Leadership

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.), chair of the House Science Committee, received the George E. Brown Jr. Science-Engineering-Technology Leadership Award on March 5 from the Science-Engineering-Technology Work Group (SETWG) and the Coalition for Technology Partnerships. The presentation was made by the president of the American Vacuum Society, Rudolph Ludeke, during the multisociety Congressional Visits Days organized by SETWG.

The award recognizes members of Congress who have demonstrated active leadership in the determination of science, engineering, and technology public policy along with strong public advocacy in support of a role for the federal government in research. The annual award is named after George E. Brown Jr., who was a member of the House of Representatives for more than 35 years, chair of the Science Committee, and a leading statesman and advocate for science, engineering, and technology policy in Congress.

In accepting the award, Boehlert reiterated his determination to see that the federal government supports a "healthy, sustainable, and productive R&D establishment—one that educates students, increases human knowledge, strengthens U.S. competitiveness, and contributes to the well-being of the nation and the world." He challenged the science, engineering, and technology communities to help him by advocating the cause to every member of Congress.

The SETWG is an information network comprising professional, scientific, and engineering societies; higher education associations; institutions of higher learning; and trade associations concerned about the future vitality of U.S. science, mathematics, and engineering enterprises.

Senate Debates Energy Policy Act of 2002

The U.S. Senate has been debating the Energy Policy Act of 2002 (S. 517) for several weeks. Written by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), chair of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, the bill addresses future energy needs, encourages increased production of traditional



Chair of the House Science Committee, Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-N.Y.) (left), receives the George E. Brown Jr. Science-Engineering-Technology Leadership Award, presented by Rudolph Ludeke, president of the American Vacuum Society, on behalf of the Science-Engineering-Technology Work Group and the Coalition for Technology Partnerships.

resources such as oil and gas, and gives top priority to expanding the use of renewable energies.

Initially identified as S. 1766 by Bingaman and Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.), in February the bill was introduced as an amendment (S.A. 2917) to S. 517, a technology-transfer bill. In early March, Daschle called for swift passage of the bill. He said that while the energy bill passed last August by the House of Representatives (H.R. 4) is similar to the Senate bill, the Senate version combines traditional fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, a balance that Daschle said he feels the House version lacks.

In highlighting the differences, Daschle points out that the Senate version creates a renewable-fuels standard, while the House version calls for a study on the issue. The Senate version requires that electric suppliers produce 10% of their electricity from renewable-energy sources by 2020, and it creates a tax incentive to promote the use of biodiesel, a soybean-based fuel. Daschle also said that while the Senate version provides a five-year extension of the production tax credit for electricity generated by wind, solar, geothermal, or biomass, the House version extends the tax credit for wind only.

Bingaman's measure to expand the use of renewable energy was approved by the Senate on March 21. In a statement at a conference on geothermal power in early April, Bingaman said, "If we are going to achieve energy independence, we must begin to rely more heavily on renewable-energy sources and new technologies that will help us use energy more efficiently."

To help achieve this goal, Bingaman's bill would raise funding for renewable-energy research and development programs at the Department of Energy from \$500 million in fiscal year 2003 to \$733 million in fiscal year 2006.

In another area of alternative energy, the Senate passed an amendment in mid-March to authorize the Nuclear Power 2010 program within the Energy Department. Sen. Larry Craig (R-Idaho), who authored the initiative, expects the amendment to increase the science and research base of some of the national laboratories. The program is designed to bring next-generation nuclear reactors on line by the year 2010.

Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), one of the co-sponsors of the amendment and senior member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said, "Senator Craig's inclusion of international collaboration is also critical....Many countries have strong nuclear-energy programs; we can achieve mutual goals faster and cheaper if we work together, just as it is now happening with the ten-nation effort toward the Generation IV reactor." The activities of the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) support the recommendation in the administration's National Energy Policy to pursue research that will develop next-generation nuclear reactor technologies. GIF charter members are developing a Generation IV technology roadmap that, when completed in fall 2002, will define the research necessary to develop and deploy the most promising technologies.

For an article on President George W. Bush's energy policy, see the July 2001 issue of *MRS Bulletin*, page 502; for a public affairs forum article by Sen. Jeff Bingaman on the materials R&D opportunities in the Senate Energy Policy Act, see the March 2002 issue of *MRS Bulletin*, page 183. □

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