

White House Issues Science Funding Directive

It's normal for the White House to tell federal agencies how to use their budgets. During the Bush Administration, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) annually issued memoranda that mentioned specific funding amounts for specific federal agencies.

This year, Peter Orszag, Director of the OMB, and Presidential Science Advisor John Holdren have issued a similar memo to guide federal agencies in the preparation of their FY11 budgets. Unlike previous years, however, there is no mention of specific agencies or levels of funding.

Instead of specifics, the memo outlines general guidelines federal agencies should follow when preparing their individual FY11 budget proposals. The memorandum directs agencies to build on the scientific priorities included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The Orszag-Holdren memo directs agency heads to redirect resources from other activities to “science and technology activities that address four practical challenges and strengthen four cross-cutting areas that underlie success in addressing all of them.”

The four challenges are:

- Using science and technology to drive economic recovery

- Promoting energy technologies to reduce dependence on foreign energy sources and reduce the impact of climate change
- Using biomedical science and information technology to improve public health while reducing healthcare costs
- Using technology to protect military personnel and the nation

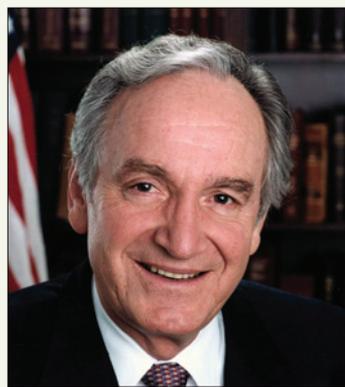
Agency leaders were also urged to improve the internal evaluation of agency programs, include in the agency budget proposal the expected outcomes of the research they fund, and develop publicly available documentation of federal investments in science and technology.

The OMB memo concludes with the following exhortation, “Finally, agencies are expected to conduct programs in accordance with the highest standards of ethical and scientific integrity and to have clear principles, guidelines and policies on issues such as scientific openness, scientific misconduct, conflicts of interest, protection of privacy, and the appropriate treatment of human subjects.”

To read the complete OMB memo, go to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/memoranda_fy2009/m09-27.pdf. ■

—Kevin M. Wilson

Harkin to Lead Health Panel



Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) has been selected by the U.S. Senate Democratic Caucus to succeed the late U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) as Chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Kennedy passed away August 25, 2009, 18 months after being diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor.

Harkin, already Chair of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education, the committee responsible for funding the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has been a long-time supporter of biomedical research and the NIH. ■

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