



NIH director Francis Collins seems to have secured government backing for a translational-science centre.

FUNDING

Last-minute wins for US science

Bill tops up health, energy and translational-science spending.

BY IVAN SEMENIUK AND SUSAN YOUNG

A year-end push by the US Congress to pass a \$915-billion spending bill has delivered on a key initiative proposed by Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

In addition to funding the NIH at nearly \$30.7 billion for the 2012 fiscal year, the bill dissolves the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) and allocates a large portion of its budget — roughly 45% — to the creation of a National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). It is the biggest organizational change at the biomedical agency in decades.

The translational-science centre was proposed by Collins late last year and fast-tracked by the administration of President Barack Obama for establishment in 2012. But the dissolution of the NCRR has met with some resistance within the NIH, particularly from those worried about the fate of its programmes, which will be parcelled out to other NIH institutes and the director's office (see *Nature* 471, 15–16; 2011). And in June, Denny Rehberg (Republican, Montana), chairman of the House Committee on Appropriations for Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies objected to not having

received a formal budget request for the new centre. The committee made no provision for it in a draft bill released on 29 September. The reappearance of the centre in legislation passed by the Senate on 17 December — and expected to be signed into law by Obama — brings Collins's initiative closer to reality.

"Having the NIH in the discussions about the future of translational research is critical, so we are excited about its potential role," says Margaret Anderson, executive director of FasterCures, an organization based in Washington DC that works to speed up medical progress. "This is a smart allocation of resources."

The NIH also gets a reprieve from paying

into the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Its \$298-million share will now be covered by the Department of State. Overall, the NIH receives \$299 million more than last year.

The omnibus bill also includes allocations for the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency (see 'Science by numbers'). Funding for some agencies, including NASA and the National Science Foundation (NSF), was established in a bill that passed on 17 November (see *Nature* 479, 455–456; 2011).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, will also see a small increase from last year's allocation, some of which comes from the mammoth health-care reform bill that Obama championed in 2010. But Karl Moeller, executive director of the Campaign for Public Health in Washington DC, worries about a longer-term decline in the agency's discretionary budget and about the CDC's lack of champions on Capitol Hill. "If you poll the public, they love prevention, but funding that, for some reason, just doesn't excite members of Congress," says Moeller.

Energy research will see a small rise in 2012. The bill allocates \$4.9 billion to the Department of Energy's Office of Science — roughly 1% over its 2011 figure — and \$275 million to the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E) to pursue high-risk, high-return projects. The latter figure is far below the president's ambitious request of \$550 million for ARPA-E, but it will allow the fledgling agency to proceed with funding a new round of projects (see *Nature* 471, 145–146; 2011).

Climate science has come under particular scrutiny, a reflection of Republican antipathy towards the regulation of greenhouse-gas emissions. The bill requires the administration to provide a detailed account of money spent on programmes related to climate change in 2011. The Environmental Protection Agency's budget has been cut by 3.4%, with a \$14-million reduction in funding for clean-air and climate-research programmes. The bill does, however, make \$10 million available to the state department to contribute to the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. ■

SCIENCE BY NUMBERS

Selected figures from the latest spending bill passed by the US Congress, compared with the president's 2012 request and previous fiscal year allocations (US\$ million).

	2010 actual	2011 estimated	2012 requested	2012 passed
National Institutes of Health	30,784	30,399	31,456	30,698
Environmental Protection Agency	10,281	8,682	8,973	8,463
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (discretionary)	6,390	5,649	5,817	5,668
Department of Energy's Office of Science	4,964	4,858	5,416	4,889
US Geological Survey	1,112	1,084	1,118	1,070

Sources: White House OMB, House Committee on Appropriations, CDC