

AIBS news

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AIBS *news*

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AIBS Helps New Faculty Prepare to Speak with Decisionmakers

AIBS Public Policy Director Robert Gropp traveled to New Mexico in January to provide a daylong workshop on communicating with decisionmakers for nearly 20 new faculty members there. The workshop was part of an annual New Mexico Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) junior faculty leadership development program. In addition to new faculty members from institutions across New Mexico, the program also includes faculty from universities in Nevada and Idaho.

According to William Michener, director of the New Mexico EPSCoR state program, "the purpose of the Faculty Leadership Program is to provide relatively new and as yet untenured faculty with the leadership skills they need to excel at their research, education, and public service." The leadership program strives to help participants develop skills such as time management, successful grant writing, effective teaching and mentoring, and how to optimally communicate with the media and decisionmakers. Skills that "are critical to faculty success, yet new faculty rarely receive the necessary training," Michener says.

"The participants clearly recognized the importance of developing communication skills and tools that will help them convey the importance of their work to decisionmakers," Gropp said.

Michener further stated, "Scientists that can effectively communicate have enormous power to inform decision-making, enhance public support for science and education, and erase misperceptions about issues like climate change that will affect humanity far into the future."

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To learn more about AIBS Public Policy Office training programs and workshops, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/policy_training.html.

Joint Scientific Society Letter to White House on Scientific Integrity Policy

On 21 January, AIBS joined 14 other scientific and professional societies to thank the president's science adviser, John Holdren, for a 17 December 2010 memorandum to federal agencies on scientific integrity. The letter, which was initiated by the Wildlife Society, specifically commends Holdren for developing a policy that recognizes the importance of allowing and encouraging federal scientists to participate in scientific societies.

Now Available: 2010 AIBS Public Policy Office Annual Report

Have you ever wondered how you or your organization might benefit from and work with AIBS to advance science and science education public policy? The AIBS Public Policy Office has released its 2010 Annual Report, which serves as a quick reference for how AIBS is working independently and in collaboration with our members to integrate the biological science and public policy communities. To read or download a copy of the 2010 report, please visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/resources/PPO_Annual_Report_2010.pdf.

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org/public-policy-reports

Public Policy Report for 31 January 2011

- **AIBS Applauds President's State of the Union Address.** During the 2011 State of the Union address,

President Barack Obama challenged the nation to recommit to a spirit of innovation. "We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world," said the President. In order to accomplish this, the president noted that the nation must invest the resources needed to improve science education and drive scientific research.

- **House Appropriations Committee Membership Announced.** House Republicans have selected Kentucky's Hal Rogers to serve as Chairman of the powerful House Committee on Appropriations. Representative Norm Dicks (D-WA) will be the Ranking Minority Member for the full committee as well as hold the top Democratic seat on the Defense Subcommittee.
- **House Science, Space and Technology Committee Membership Announced: First-term Members to Hold Leadership Positions.** On 20 January, the Republican members of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology met to elect subcommittee chairman. The full committee will be chaired by Representative Ralph Hall (R-TX). Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) will serve as the ranking minority member.
- **New Student Campaign for Science, Science Education Launched, Act Now.** Over the past few weeks, student members of the Botanical Society of America have worked with the AIBS Public Policy Office to craft an open letter explaining to lawmakers why continued investments in scientific research and training programs are essential to

their future career development. This grassroots effort is now becoming a national campaign. As part of this effort, AIBS has created a Web page that allows undergraduate and graduate students to sign an open letter to lawmakers.

- **Majority of American Students Not Proficient in Science.** According to the results of the latest version of the Nation's Report Card, 66 percent of fourth graders, 70 percent of eighth graders, and 79 percent of twelfth graders did not score at the "proficient" level or higher on the 2009 science assessment. Even more troubling is the high proportion of students who failed to achieve a "basic" understanding of scientific concepts (28 percent of fourth graders, 37 percent of eighth graders, and 40 percent of 12 graders). Less than 2 percent of students in each of the grades achieved an "advanced" score.

Public Policy Report for 18 January 2011

- **Congressional Leadership Announced for Education Committees.** The start of the 112th Congress brought some changes to the leadership of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over education policy. In the House of Representatives, the Education and Labor Committee has been renamed; it is once again the Education and the Workforce Committee. The committee will also have a new chairman, Representative John Kline (R-MN), who has served as the top ranking Republican on the panel since 2009. In a statement released in December 2010, Kline said: "My goal for the federal programs and agencies that oversee our schools and workplaces is to provide certainty and simplicity. We must ensure federal red tape does not become the enemy of innovation, and that federal mandates do not become roadblocks on the path to reform."

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In the past, Kline has advocated for greater flexibility and local control in education.

- **Federal Employee Groups Criticize Fiscal Commission Report.** Fifteen unions and organizations representing federal employees have sent a letter to President Obama expressing serious concerns with several recommendations included in the December 2010 report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform. The commission's report, *The Moment of Truth*, included several recommendations that, if enacted, would impact federal employees, including those in science and natural resource agencies. For example, the report calls for the president and Congress to impose a three-year pay freeze on federal workers and Department of Defense civilians; to reduce the size of the federal workforce through attrition; and to reduce federal travel, printing, and vehicle budgets.
- **Privately Owned Forests Key to Conservation of At-risk Species.** More than sixty percent of threatened and endangered plant and animal species in the United States are found in private forests. More than 57 million acres of private forests, however, are expected to experience substantial increases in development over the next few decades, according to a new report by the US Forest Service. The report suggests actions to reduce the impacts of development on wildlife and plant species already at risk, including building wildlife tunnels under highways, clustering housing in order to maintain open space, and increasing public awareness of the negative impacts of free-ranging cats and other pets.
- **NSF Program Directors Outline Plan for Science, Engineering, and Education for Sustainability Program.** A recent "dear colleague" letter from the heads

of all 11 directorates and offices at the National Science Foundation (NSF) outlines the agency's plans for supporting the "science and engineering research needed to understand and overcome the barriers to sustainable human well-being." The Science, Engineering, and Education for Sustainability program is an NSF-wide investment that "will include the conceptual, theoretical, empirical, and computational research needed to further develop the basic science, engineering, education, and policy knowledge base relevant to sustainability. Additionally, it will support projects at multiple scales, from the individual to the system level,

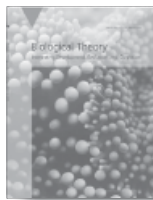
and will stimulate innovations in education and learning research and practice."

- **Public Comments Sought on Draft Plan for Environmental Research on Impacts of Nanotechnology.** The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Nanoscale Science, Engineering, and Technology Subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council are seeking public comments on the draft National Nanotechnology Initiative Strategy for Nanotechnology-related Environmental, Health, and Safety Research. The document outlines

the federal government's strategy for conducting research to ensure the responsible development of nanotechnology. Public comments are being accepted through 21 January. For more information or to download the draft strategy, visit <http://strategy.nano.gov/>.

- **Deadline Approaching for the 2011 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award.** The deadline to apply for the AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award is 5 p.m. EST on 22 January 2010. Application information is available at www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html.

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Werner Callebaut, Editor-in-Chief

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