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BISHOP, SCHUMER, CLINTON, BLAST CUTS TO BNL PROGRAMS

RHIC Budget Cut to Level Recommended by President

Washington, DC—Congressman Tim Bishop and Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton blasted cuts, which will have a major negative impact at Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL). The Conference Report of the Energy and Water Resources Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2006, contains drastic cuts to two major programs, the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) and the Center for Translational Neuroimaging.

Bishop had fended off the cuts when the bill passed the House in May and Senators Schumer and Clinton had maintained the funding when the bill passed the Senate in July. However, the funding was cut in Conference Committee, down to numbers originally proposed by President Bush in his budget in January. The bill passed the House on Wednesday and will be voted on by the Senate within the next few days.

"Here in Brookhaven, we're seeing the real-world consequences of this Administration's misguided budget policies," Congressman Bishop said. "The federal government has already invested more than $1 billion in the RHIC, and it simply makes no sense to let such an investment go unused."

"Spending nearly a billion dollars on a facility, only to slash its budget so it can barely operate, boggles the mind," Senator Schumer said. "The bottom line is that the President's budget renders the RHIC nearly useless. For over fifty years, Brookhaven National Lab has produced excellent – at times Nobel-prize-winning – scientific work to benefit America. Now one of its best facilities, the most advanced in the world, is getting cheated and in turn the American scientific community and the international scientific community won't be able to benefit from the work that the RHIC produces."

"The Senate provided enough funding in this bill to fully fund the critical research ongoing at Brookhaven Labs. It is an invaluable resource, not only to the pursuit of science but to Long Island and its economic future. That the President's budget, and the Energy and Water Appropriations conference report stripped this funding out of the bill is outrageous and we will fight to restore this funding so that sound science and key research is not jeopardized," Senator Clinton said.

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The RHIC is a world-renowned 2.4-mile superconductor that accelerates gold ions to nearly the speed of light and causes collisions that recreate the 'Big Bang', offering a glimpse into the birth of the universe during its first few microseconds. Its budget was cut by approximately $13 million, from its overall budget of approximately $131 million. The cut, combined with increased energy costs, may result in the RHIC being used as little as five weeks over the next year.

The Center for Translational Neuroimaging, which conducts basic clinical research with a strong focus on drug addiction and obesity, had its $5.1 million budget slashed by nearly $2 million.

On a positive front, the bill contains full funding-$36.5 million-for BNL's new Center for Functional Nanomaterials. The 94,500-square-foot state-of-the-art laboratory/office facility is expected to attract an estimated 300 researchers. The new Center will be at the forefront of research that is expected to lead to new technologies, such as faster computers, new communications devices, improved solar energy and new energy alternatives. Ground was broken on this new building in October.

"I am pleased that despite setbacks in this bill, that we are pushing forward in other areas," Bishop said. "This new center will bring jobs and cutting edge research to Long Island."

There is also progress in ongoing cleanup efforts at the Lab. The Conference Report has full funding- $34.3 million- to cleanup BNL's graphite research reactor and high flux beam reactor along with other soil and water remediation projects.

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