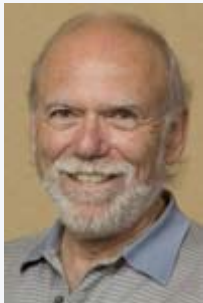


Director's Corner

20 December 2007



Barry Barish

Omnibus is ominous

Our plan this week was to make this issue of *ILC NewsLine* a thematic one, highlighting progress on Superconducting Radiofrequency R&D, the central technology for the International Linear Collider. It would have made a very nice final edition for this calendar year, but unfortunately new events that imperil the future course of the ILC must be addressed instead. Last week, I wrote a special Director's Update on the UK's Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) decision to "cease investment in the International Linear Collider." This week, in an independent action, the US Congress put together an "Omnibus Funding Bill" for fiscal year 2008 that will be signed into law within days. The very bad news is that this bill drastically cuts the level of funding for Department of Energy ILC R&D to one quarter the proposed amount for FY08. Details are described in the news articles in today's *NewsLine*. I will confine my remarks here to putting this funding action into context.

The US budget process is a very complicated one that sometimes takes unpredictable twists and turns. This year had been an optimistic one for US science. There was support for a programme to double the investment in the physical sciences in the coming years, which followed an earlier successful doubling of the life sciences budget. A very influential report, "The Gathering Storm," was very persuasive and influential in highlighting the problem and solutions. It helped catalyse broad and bipartisan support for increased funding for the physical sciences. The budget climate has been improving as a result and for this year, FY08, the President's proposed budget, submitted in February had healthy increases for the DoE's Office of Science, including significantly increased support for ILC R&D to the level of \$60 million.

Congress began working on the budgets following President Bush's request last February. The proposed budgets, including the high energy physics and ILC budgets received strong support. However, over the same period, Congress passed several new spending initiatives that were outside the President's budget. When it came time to bring the total budget forward, the President threatened to veto the budget because the total had grown significantly. He stated unequivocally that he intended to veto the budget unless Congress reduced the level to that originally proposed.

In the end, Congress compromised and looked for cuts in other parts of the budget. Unfortunately, science became a target, especially new projects in the DOE's Office of Science. Consequently, Congress removed all construction funding for the NOVA neutrino experiment at Fermilab and for ITER, the large international fusion project. They also reduced ILC R&D funding from \$60 million to \$15 million. The US fiscal year began October 2007, so we are almost three months into this year. Much of the allocated \$15 million has already been spent. The funding for general SCRF R&D, which also has implications for the ILC, was also cut to a quarter of its proposed level.

The consequences for ILC are dire. I won't address them in any detail until they are better understood. Clearly our plan to globally develop the technology, design and costing for an Engineering Design Report will need major revision. I intend to try my very best to find a path forward that builds on all the great work that has been done toward an ILC.

-- Barry Barish