

Patents bill

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tions. "Particularly vulnerable," said Bayh in introducing the bill, "are small businesses, which lack the financial resources and market power to engage in the development process of Government-supported inventions without the protection of short-term exclusive rights." Through its noncompetitive licensing policy the Federal government also gives foreign industry an undue advantage, Bayh argued. "American research is made available to foreign and domestic firms alike," he said. Bayh also spoke of the importance of Federal patent policy in controlling the flow of technology from the government's R&D programs to the commercial sector and the consumer.

The bill provides that each nonprofit organization (including universities, but excluding government-owned research facilities) and small business receiving Federal subsidies for R&D have the option of retaining title to inventions, except in "exceptional circumstances." In such circumstances, the decision of a funding agency to retain title to an invention would be reviewed by the Comptroller General. The Federal government would receive title to any invention not reported to it "within a reasonable time," or when the inventor does not intend to file for patent rights. To ensure that the aim of the bill is being met, the funding agency would have the right to require periodic progress reports from the inventor on the utilization of the invention. In addition, the bill requires that nonprofit organizations receive the approval of the Federal funding agency before assigning invention rights to a third party. S414 also contains a provision for the government to be repaid all or part of the money it spent in support of the work in question.

Three key senators have, at the time of this writing, not yet announced their positions on the bill. Edward Kennedy

(D-Mass.), the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has not spoken on either side of the bill, and his position is expected to carry a good deal of influence, both in the Committee and on the floor. Russell Long (D-La.) and Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisc.) headed the opposition to a similar patent-reform bill in the Senate two years ago, so S414 supporters are anxiously awaiting their pronouncements. Nelson, who heads the Senate Select Committee on Small Business, may look favorably on the bill's preferential treatment of small businesses.

An identical bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives, but action there has been delayed pending the long-awaited results of the domestic policy review on industrial innovation, which may include recommendations for Federal patent policy reform. A report of a domestic policy review industrial advisory subcommittee concluded that the goal of stimulating industrial development of technology could be achieved either by assigning the title to an invention to the contractor, as S414 does, or by requiring a greater government effort to market inventions of which it is the owner. Hearings on the House bill are tentatively being planned for this fall. —MEJ

US signs four scientific agreements with Chinese

The US and the People's Republic of China signed four agreements in May that call for exchanges of scientific and technological information and personnel between the two countries. The accords are intended to increase cooperation in precision measurements and standards of length, weight, temperature, time, frequency and electrical characteristics, analytical chemistry, materials research, applied mathematics and other topics. Signed on behalf of the US by Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps, National

Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration head Richard Frank and Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology Jordan Baruch, the agreements are protocols to the basic compact initialed by Presidential Science Adviser Frank Press and Deputy Premier Fang Yi in January (PHYSICS TODAY, May, page 113).

According to one of the agreements, China will send scientists to work in National Bureau of Standards laboratories for periods ranging from six months to two years.

The major source of the information sent to China by the US (under the agreement) will be the Commerce Department's National Technical Information Service at Springfield, Va.

Science museum offers exhibit-design program

A study program on the design and fabrication of interactive museum exhibits is being offered by the Exploratorium, a science and perception museum located in San Francisco. The program is open to academic faculty members and museum technicians interested in organizing centers like the Exploratorium on campus or in their communities. The internships, which will last from two to five weeks, will stress the techniques of planning and construction of exhibits and the associated graphic and written materials. Those intending to apply should have ideas for possible projects at their own institutions. For information on enrollment and financial assistance, contact Robert J. Semper, The Exploratorium, 3601 Lyon Street, San Francisco, California 94123.

in brief

Jerome Allan Smith recently took over the position of Technical Director of the Office of Naval Research. He is now responsible for the direction and management of basic research in the Navy. Smith was formerly a professor in the department of mechanical and aerospace engineering at Princeton University.

The Ford Foundation is funding a major study comparing coal with other energy options available to the US over the next 20 years. The study, to be conducted by a group of 20 scientists and scholars, is to be financed by a \$600 000 grant to Resources for the Future. Director of the study is Hans H. Landsberg, co-director of the RFF Center for Energy Policy Research.

Bennett Miller has been named program director of the DOE office of solar, geothermal, electric and storage systems after serving for one year as acting director. □

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