

Congressional Fellowship program gets good review

At its 24 April meeting in Crystal City, Virginia, the APS Council accepted a report by an *ad hoc* panel appointed in 1986 to review the Congressional Scientist Fellowship Program. The panel, headed by Mildred S. Dresselhaus of MIT, recommended that the society continue to support the program as part of its public service activities, that the choice of Congressional affiliation be left to the fellows, that mechanisms be developed whereby fellows can better contribute to the effectiveness of the society's public service programs and that another review of the program be held in five years.

The council established the program in 1973 in response to a proposal from the APS Forum on Physics and Society. The forum had drawn the council's attention to a 1970 survey of members of Congress that inquired into their sources of technical information. In that survey, which was published as an appendix to a book by Frank von Hippel and Joel Primack, 68% of the respondents felt that Congress was not adequately informed on technical issues involved in legislation and 88% felt that Congress's lack of technical information placed it at a disadvantage compared with the executive branch. When Congressional respondents were asked to choose among a number of possible remedies for lack of technical information, the two most popular choices were the establishment of an agency to assess technology and establishment of Congressional scientist fellowship programs.

The *ad hoc* panel's recent review of the program found that the fellows have provided valuable service to the Congressional offices in which they have worked, bringing credit to themselves and to APS. Democratic Senator Jeff Bingamon of New Mexico is among the members of Congress who have praised fellows attached to their staffs. "I hope that The American Physical Society...and other technical societies will consider expanding their fellowship programs so that more of my colleagues could benefit from the ex-

pertise these fellows bring to Congress," Bingamon said in 1984. APS fellows Anthony Fainberg and Alan Sweedler worked for Bingamon.

Since 1973, 24 members of APS have held Congressional Fellowships, serving on the staffs of eight senators, four representatives, three Senate committees and one House committee. APS provides financial support for Congressional Fellows but makes it very clear that the fellows are in no sense employees of APS. In leaving the choice of Congressional affiliation to its fellows, the society has found that fellows are most effective when their interests and talents are suited to the programs of the host Congressional office. APS officers, the council, the Panel on Public Affairs and the Office of Public Affairs in Washington are resources available to current Congressional Fellows, who in turn become resources for the society as past fellows.

Several past fellows have served on the council, POPA, the Committee on Opportunities and the Committee on Applications of Physics. Thomas Moss, last year's chair of POPA, was a Congressional Fellow in 1974-75.

Robert L. Park, founder and director of the APS Office of Public Affairs in Washington, finds the past fellows very helpful and includes those who are still working on Capitol Hill among a larger group that meets informally for lunch to discuss problems. Says Park: "It was really the former fellows who were my first contacts when we set up the Office of Public Affairs. They provided an initial network—a quick start—which we were then able to build on."

Mary L. Shoaf, the administrator of the Congressional Fellowship program, notes that it will continue to be the responsibility of the selection committee to pick candidates who understand the purpose and value of the program to APS and to Congress. Says Shoaf, "The contributions of the fellows during their year in Washington and the work they have done afterwards amount to an admirable catalog of contributions to physics and [are an]

activity well worth continuing."

Information on the 1988-89 Congressional Scientist Fellowship Program will be published in the *APS Bulletin* beginning with the September 1987 issue. Completed applications, including all letters of reference, must be received by 12 February 1988. For further information, contact Mary L. Shoaf, Administrator, Congressional Scientist Fellowship Program, APS, 335 East 45th Street, New York NY 10017. Shoaf can be reached by telephone at (609) 683-2104.

APS to co-host third meeting of physics department heads

A third conference of physics department chairs will be held on 19-20 February 1988 at the Key Bridge Marriott Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Entitled "Physics for the 1990s," the conference is being organized jointly by AAPT and APS. The steering committee, headed by Mark McDermott (University of Washington at Seattle), is scheduling plenary sessions on topics of general interest plus smaller workshops.

Topics will include the role of the four-year colleges; undergraduate research programs; the impact of changing demographics; physics in the liberal arts curriculum; physics educational alliances among high schools, colleges and industry; the undergraduate physics curriculum; minorities and women in physics; employment in the 1990s; and NSF funding of research centers and its education directorate.

The format will be similar to previous conferences run in 1983 and 1985 (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, July 1985, page 70). All chairpersons at institutions with bachelor's, master's or doctoral programs in physics or astronomy will be invited.

For further information and to give program suggestions, write to Conference of Physics Chairs, c/o Mark McDermott, Chair, American Association of Physics Teachers, 5112 Berwyn Road, College Park MD 20740. □