

FYI SCIENCE POLICY BRIEFS

DOE redirects FY 2025 money to favored programs

Budget details from the Department of Energy reveal the shifting of fiscal year 2025 funds away from wind and solar energy and into water and geothermal technologies. Congress approved \$318 million for solar initiatives for FY 2024, but DOE plans to spend only \$42 million of it—an 87% cut—in FY 2025. Wind energy initiatives will similarly see a 78% cut. Meanwhile, the department is more than quadrupling funding for geothermal energy from FY 2024 levels, and water power will see a 50% increase.

Congress passed legislation earlier this year that maintained most science agencies' top-line budgets at or near FY 2024 levels but did not specify funding at the program level. In response to the budget details, Democrats overseeing DOE appropriations argued that the spending law carried forward FY 2024 appropriations for solar and wind energy and that DOE's spending plan for FY 2025 is "in defiance" of the legislation.

The department also shifted money between programs in the Office of Science, including a 30% increase to isotope R&D and production and a 22% cut to the workforce development program from FY 2024 levels. Other areas, such as nuclear physics, advanced scientific computing research, and high-energy physics, will see increases, while others, including biological and environmental research and basic energy sciences, will see cuts.

Congress has indicated a willingness to diverge from the administration's budget requests in its funding bills for FY 2026, including an increase for the Office of Science and near-level funding for NSF and NASA. The House Committee on Appropriations bill does not eliminate funding for solar and wind initiatives in DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, as proposed in the president's request, but it still proposes an almost 50%

cut to the office. Lawmakers have introduced bills in both chambers directing agencies to pause implementation of caps on indirect costs, and they have shown interest in developing a new indirect cost policy with the research community. —CZ

Report on misconduct in Antarctica calls for new standards, training

NSF released a report in July on sexual assault and harassment in the US Antarctic Program (USAP). The report draws on a survey that NSF conducted in 2024 as a follow-up to one conducted in 2021 in the wake of high-profile accusations of sexual violence at USAP facilities. The report recommends installing video monitoring in public spaces, improving training for supervisors, and increasing protections for newer and younger staff. The report also recommends introducing "benchmark standards" for USAP contractors and requiring increased training for their human resources personnel.

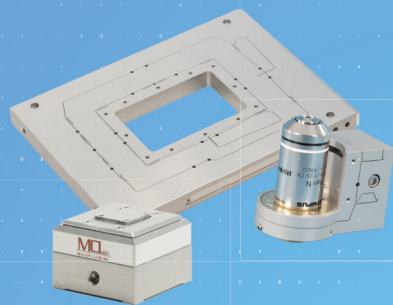
As PHYSICS TODAY went to press, NSF was reviewing proposals for a new primary contractor to manage its Antarctic facilities. The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has accused Leidos, the current holder of the USAP facilities management contract, of failing to prevent sexual violence and lacking basic reporting systems.

The NSF report states that the 2024 survey of recent USAP personnel found that 69% of respondents had observed at least one incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment and 41% had experienced at least one such incident themselves. The survey also found "concerning beliefs that may be associated with a permissive environment" for sexual misconduct. Regarding such beliefs, 43% of respondents said they agree that "sexual jokes and innuendos are a normal part of deployment" within the USAP community, and 10% agreed with the statement "If you want to date/hookup with a USAP community member, it's ok to keep asking until they agree to a date or very definitively say no." The report recommends launching media campaigns aimed at correcting those attitudes and informing staff of reporting procedures. —JT PT

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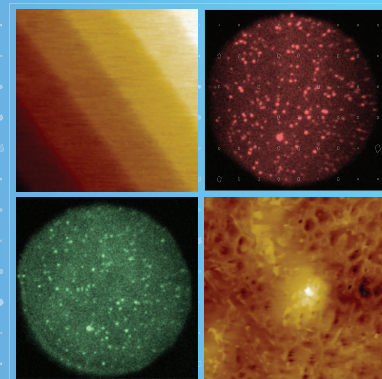


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Precision motion
Intelligent control = no drift
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