



Get a Career Plan that Works. **Science Careers**  
From the journal Science AAAS  
Search Jobs Now

AAAS.ORG | FEEDBACK | HELP | LIBRARIANS

Daily News

Enter Search Term

ADVANCED

ALERTS | ACCESS RIGHTS | MY ACCOUNT | SIGN IN

News Home ScienceNOW ScienceInsider Premium Content from Science About Science News

Home > News > ScienceInsider > March 2012 > Proposed U.S. Fusion Cuts Ignite Debate



## Proposed U.S. Fusion Cuts Ignite Debate

by David Malakoff on 21 March 2012, 12:27 PM | [0 Comments](#)

[Email](#) [Print](#) |

0

[More](#)

[PREVIOUS ARTICLE](#)

[NEXT ARTICLE](#)

Both Republicans and Democrats on a U.S. House of Representatives spending panel yesterday questioned the Department of Energy's (DOE's) plan to help pay for an international fusion project by shutting down a U.S.-based fusion machine.

"Fusion appears to come out the loser here," and that is a "concern," Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), the chair of the energy subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, told William Brinkman, the director of DOE's Office of Science. "To terminate anybody at this point in this game is a dangerous thing to do" if the U.S. wants fusion energy to become a reality, added Representative John Olver (D-MA).

Members of the panel repeatedly asked Brinkman about the implications of a plan, outlined in the Obama Administration's 2013 budget request released in February, [to trim DOE's fusion energy sciences budget](#) by 0.8%, to \$398 million. At the same time, the budget would increase the U.S. contribution to ITER, a \$23 billion fusion reactor being built in Cadarache, France, to \$150 million, up from \$105 million this year. To help pay for the ITER increase, DOE is proposing to shut down a fusion experiment known as the Alcator C-Mod at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge. Cutting C-Mod, which is one of three operating fusion devices in the United States, would save \$18 million in the next fiscal year, which begins in October.

That plan, [Brinkman told committee members](#), partly reflected an effort to avoid duplication, since C-Mod does research that could also be done elsewhere in the United States and abroad. "I don't want to belittle the MIT work, [they have] done some very fine work," he said. But the other two U.S. fusion projects—particularly the DIII-D tokamak operated by General Atomics in San Diego, California—are now more scientifically productive, he said.

That explanation didn't appear to satisfy members of the spending panel. "OK, I understand that things are not easy," Olver, a former chemistry professor who is retiring this year after 22 years representing a largely rural district in western Massachusetts, told Brinkman. "But if we wish ITER to be successful, then we have to have a successful group of institutions that continue to function ... not only for the success of ITER but also for the success of our domestic program." The growing U.S. commitment to ITER, he warned, "is going to eat our whole domestic program."

"Obviously that can't happen," Brinkman responded. But he conceded that there would need to be budget shifts if the United States is to stay on track to increase its contribution to ITER. "We are going to have to find another source of funds" to meet ITER commitments, he said.

That's unlikely this year, Frelinghuysen warned during the hearing, which also touched briefly on DOE's plans for

[ENLARGE IMAGE](#)



**Confusion?** Representative Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) is questioning DOE's plans to cut fusion research budget.

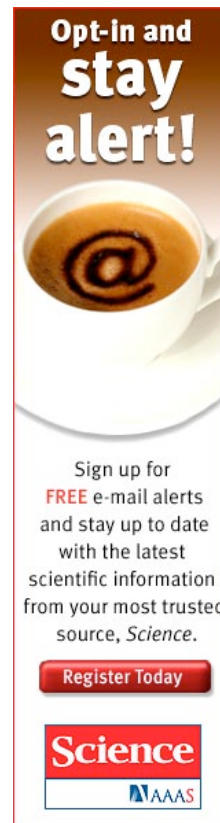
Credit: U.S. House of Representatives

ADVERTISEMENT



READ MORE  
A New Era for Clinical Models  
Life Science Technology Feature

ADVERTISEMENT



Opt-In and stay alert!

Sign up for FREE e-mail alerts and stay up to date with the latest scientific information from your most trusted source, Science.

Register Today

Science  
AAAS

computing research and other issues. There is a "strong probability" that House lawmakers will provide "flat funding" for the Office of Science, he said, rather than the 2.4% increase, to about \$5 billion, requested by the Obama Administration.



Follow ScienceInsider on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

[BUDGET\\_2013](#) [DOE](#) [ENERGY\\_SCIENCE](#)

Posted in [Energy](#)

[Email](#) [Print](#) | [Share](#) **11** **0** [tweet](#) [More](#)

**Related on Insider**



MARCH 9, 2012

**China's Booming Solar and Wind Sector May Be Put On Hold**



MARCH 7, 2012

**It's Too Early to Pick a Winner on Inertial Fusion Energy, Says Study**



FEBRUARY 28, 2012

**Steve Chu's Very Lucky (Birth Day)**

Login

Share

What's on your mind...

Follow

**Echo** 0 items

[Admin](#)