

Letter From The Editor

by Philipp Steger

The current, somewhat slimmer – it's summer time, after all – edition of "Voices on U.S. Science & Technology (S&T) Policy" focuses on two issues: the increasingly confusing question of what the legal and political status quo of stem-cell based research in the U.S. is, and the role science & technology play in U.S. efforts to face bioterrorism.

In his contribution about the debate over embryonic stem-cell research and therapeutical cloning, Stephan Neuhäuser tackles a daunting challenge: to sift through the overwhelming body of material regarding the legislative proposals both in Congress and at the state level, and to provide you with an explanation of this debate that is so essential for the future of the Life Sciences in the U.S. While the topic has not received a lot of media coverage in recent times, emotional appeals by celebrities are sure to heat up the debate in the months ahead. The latest example is Christopher Reeve's announcement that, as part of his campaign on stem cell research, he plans to travel to Israel to find out more about the relevant research programs there.

My own contribution on the role of science & technology in bioterrorism preparedness-efforts acknowledges that there is a wealth of information available on the Internet for anyone who cares to delve into the complex questions of whether the U.S. is ready to deal with the potential of a bioterrorist attack. The literature is abundant, for the most part rather technical and focuses nearly exclusively on a narrowly defined role of the sciences. Hence, the provocative title of the article claims that there is, in fact, an underutilization of the sciences in the "war on bioterrorism." The contributions of Peter Palese and Dorothea Strozyk, two accomplished Austrian scientists based in the U.S., counterbalance my approach by choosing themes that would be identified with the "traditional" role of science & technology in dealing with bioterrorism.

With Irene Eckart's review of the World Resources Institute's new report "World Resources 2002-2004 – Decisions for the Earth: Balance, Voice and Power," we revisit the area of environmental policy, a policy field that "Voices" tries to cover as often as possible.

We at the OST hope that you enjoy "Voices" and wish you a pleasant summer.

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