Congressional leaders had hoped to complete all annual funding or appropriations bills before the Thanksgiving adjournment, but the large Omnibus bill did not pass. While a new continuing resolution keeps the government running through most of January for the federal fiscal year 2004 most observers expect all appropriations bills to be passed by mid-December. The House and Senate agreed upon, but did not finally pass, an energy authorization bill. The Medicare drug benefit and increases for hospital and physician payment, however, was passed.

Six of the thirteen regular appropriations (annual funding) bills cleared both Houses. These include Defense, Homeland Security and Legislative branch. The conference reports (H.R. 108-330) for the Interior and the Energy and Water (H.R. 108-357) Appropriations bills are likely to pass before Thanksgiving. Bills not yet agreed to in conference or dealt with on the Senate floor will be included in an omnibus bill. These other annual funding bills will include student aid, National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) among other key funding.

Within the Interior bill, the National Endowment for the Humanities receives a 9.7% increase over fiscal year 2003 and the National Endowment for the Arts receives a 5.2% increase. The Energy and Water Annual funding bill for Fiscal Year 2004 includes a $316 million increase over FY 2003 for the Office of Science in the Department of Energy. High Energy Physics, Nuclear Physics, Basic Energy Sciences, Fusion Energy Research, Biological and Environmental Research and Advanced Scientific Computing Research are all funded above the Fiscal Year 2003 level. The Energy Authorization bill (Energy Policy Act of 2003) was agreed upon in conference and sets the blueprint for the Energy Department research and development through Fiscal Year 2008. In the Medicare Prescription Drug bill, it appears there will be increases for graduate medical education and physician payments under Medicare.

The Columbia Engineering School Alumni Association honored two distinguished Columbians at their annual awards dinner in Lew Rotanda. Nobel Laureate Eric R. Kandel was awarded the Pupin Medal for Service to the Nation for his pioneering work in learning and memory, and Robert E. Lindberg, Jr., Engineering ’62, president of the National Institute of Aerospace, received the Edeglen Medal for Distinguished Engineering Achievement for his leadership in aerospace research.

At left, Engineering Dean Zvi Gill with Ailsa Wagner, Engineering ’94, an applied physics major, music minor; and Robert E. Lindberg, Jr., Engineering ’62, president of the National Institute of Aerospace, also with singing her song "Stand, Columbia." At right, Columbia Engineering School Alumni Association President K. Daniel Libby, Engineering ’82, M.S. ’84, Lindberg, Kandel and President Pellington.

A renowned physical chemist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, Bersohn’s scientific interest centered on the dissociation of molecules by light into fragments and on the physical and chemical properties of these fragments. He was the first to prove experimentally that some rotating molecules can absorb light and dissociate before they have time to complete a rotation.

Born in New York City on May 13, 1925, Bersohn grew up on the City’s west side, just blocks away from the American Museum of Natural History and its planetarium. Here his passion for science developed. By 1943 he received a B.S. in chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and joined the U.S. Army for two years where he worked on the Manhattan Project. He received an M.A. and Ph.D. in physics and Ph.D. (1949) from Harvard. Bersohn took at Cornell for eight years before joining Columbia in 1959. He received 1985 Herbert Brodka Prize in chemical physics from the American Physical Society in 1971, and as chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Chemistry Department of the Brookhaven National Laboratory from 1981 to 1984.

Bersohn is survived by his wife Nehama Bersohn, adjunct associate professor of Middle East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia, and their four children. Funeral services were held on Nov. 19.

Richard Bersohn

Richard Bersohn, a Columbia chemistry professor for 44 years, and the Higgins Professor of Natural Science since 1986, died on Tuesday, Nov. 18, after a long illness. A renowned physical chemist and member of the National Academy of Sciences, Bersohn’s scientific interest centered on the dissociation of molecules by light into fragments and on the physical and chemical properties of these fragments. He was the first to prove experimentally that some rotating molecules can absorb light and dissociate before they have time to complete a rotation.

Bersohn was a member of the Committee on Atomic and Molec-