

Department of Physics & Astronomy

PHYSICS NEWS FLASH

Write Your Congressman! UT Physicists Head to Washington to Support the RIA

May 17, 2005



Dr. Witek Nazarewicz, Dr. Joe Hamilton (Vanderbilt U.), Rep. Zach Wamp, Vanderbilt Graduate Student Chris Goodin, and Dr. Thomas Papenbrock

Witek Nazarewicz and Thomas Papenbrock knew what they wanted to tell the U.S. Congress, and they delivered the message in person. The UT physicists were among 24 scientists who took to Capitol Hill last week for “RIA Day.”

The Rare Isotope Accelerator project is planned as the world’s most powerful research accelerator for producing new rare isotopes that cannot be found on earth. Professor Nazarewicz is chair of the RIA Users’ Organization, which met May 11 in Washington, D.C. A chief aspect of the meeting was to deliver a letter to Congress—the object being to secure necessary funding to carry the RIA’s momentum into the next phase of research, site selection, and design. The letter was signed by 500 U.S. scientists from 34 states, with additional signatures from 250 international scientists representing 32 countries. Dr. Nazarewicz and Dr. Papenbrock met with representatives from the offices of Senator Lamar Alexander and Representatives Jim Cooper, John Duncan, and Zach Wamp. RIA members also met with staff from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Office of Management and Budget.

The goal of these visits was to convey the importance of the project to key people in Washington. As Dr. Nazarewicz wrote in his meeting report, “RIA will provide the basis to attract, educate and train future generations of scientists, engineers and technical professionals that are essential for the United States to take

advantage of the renaissance in nuclear technology and its widespread applicability to medicine, national security, engineering, energy, materials research and the environment.”

Dr. Nazarewicz is a Professor of Physics at UT and Scientific Director at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory Holifield Radioactive Ion Beam Facility. Dr. Papenbrock is an Assistant Professor of Physics with a joint appointment at ORNL. Dr. David Dean, who also holds a UT Physics-ORNL appointment, participated in some of the meetings as well.