

SciTech e-Merging News

Volume 3, Issue 2

SciStatus Update

March 2011

Policy and Research

Senate to Debate Patent Reform Act of 2011

[Reuters](#): A bill that gives judges an increased role in determining how substantial a patent is relative to its product is moving to the Senate floor. The bill aims to prevent minor patent infringements from resulting in large damage awards, as well as awarding patents to the “first to file” rather than “first to invent”. Debate on the bill should begin in the early weeks of March. See AIPLA’s position [here](#).

Supreme Court Hears Arguments on DNA-testing Laws

[Washington Post](#): The Supreme Court is soon to issue its decision on DNA-testing issues in *Skinner v Switzer*, as the inconsistent application of DNA-testing, habeas corpus, and cruel and unusual punishment are concerned. Skinner’s execution was stayed by the Court 45 minutes short of his lethal injection. Skinner’s original, court appointed defense attorney waived having the biological evidence tested, fearing it would further incriminate his client. See the oral arguments before the Court [here](#).

International

US Senate Republicans Oppose EU Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities

[Washington Times](#): Republican opposition in the Senate may interfere with the administration’s plan to accept the European Union’s Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities. Critics believe the non-binding Code may impede development and deployment of defensive space weapons. See the Code [here](#).

Fujifilm Expands into Pharmaceuticals

[Bloomberg](#): Fujifilm Holdings Corp. is buying units of Merck & Co. as it attempts to diversify into the health-care industry in order to recover from losses in declining camera and film markets. Fujifilm will buy US and UK laboratories from Merck for \$490 million, as sales in its digital camera and color film divisions fell 16% last fiscal year. See financial info for Fujifilm Holdings [here](#) and Merck & Co. [here](#).

Nature, Climate and Ecology

Biology Nobel Laureate Urges Humans to Fight Against Natural Selection

[NewScientist](#): 1974 Nobel Prize (Biology) co-winner Christian de Duve encourages resistance to natural selection and its tendency to focus on present needs, rather than the future. He suggests humanity take realistic approaches to population control and preservation of resources. See his book [here](#).

Medicine, Health and Disease

Medical Marijuana and Legal Counsel Conflicts Resolved, Somewhat...

[ABA](#): Arizona ethics opinion says lawyers can ethically advise medical marijuana business owners, even though federal law prohibits possession and sale of the substance. The opinion recognizes the conflict in

federal and state law and advises lawyers with such clients that, among other things, they should fully disclose all risks, federal and state, that the business may be exposed to. It further advises that lawyers only perform legal acts that are "necessary or desirable" to conduct that is expressly permitted under the Arizona Medical Marijuana Act. See the full opinion [here](#).

Math, Physics and Space

Extra-Dimensional Gravitons, Bosons, and the New Era of Physics with the LHC
[ScienceNews](#): Theoretical physicist Lisa Randall, Harvard University, [recently spoke](#) to the American Association for the Advancement of Science and her expectations of the Large Hadron Collider, the world's largest particle accelerator. Randall's hopes include shedding light on Kaluza-Klein particles, the Higgs Mechanism, and string theory. See Randall's Science review article [here](#).

50th Session of Legal Subcommittee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space

The fiftieth session of the Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space will take place March 28th through April 8th at the UN Office in the Vienna International Center, Austria. The session intends to discuss matters concerning UN outer space treaties, equitable use of geostationary orbits, nuclear power sources in space, debris mitigation, and peaceful exploration. See documents related to the upcoming session [here](#).

Politics

The Palin's Seek to Trademark Their Names

[ABC News](#): Former Vice Presidential candidate Sarah Palin and her daughter, Bristol, are attempting to trademark their names. Likely a means to increase their ability to prevent fraudulent fundraising and imposters on social networking services like Twitter and Facebook, the application also lists as commercial services "information about political elections" and "providing a website featuring information about political issues." See Sarah Palin and her 2.7+ million fans on Facebook [here](#).

Science in Society

Tobacco Companies Move to Discredit Advisory Committee Report on Menthol

[NY Times](#): R.J. Reynolds and Lorillard filed in U.S. District Court (D.C.) against the FDA, HHS, and the director of the Center for Tobacco Products, alleging "conflicts of interests and associated biases that are incompatible with [the committee's] role as an impartial advisor." The move is an attempt to harm the credibility of the Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee, which is expected to file a damaging report on menthol cigarettes in March. See Lorillard's stance on menthol and the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act [here](#).

Compiled February 28, 2011 by John Davis, Ph.D., South Texas College of Law, 2012

Contact: john.davis1@stcl.edu

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