

# UT biohazard lab obtains Defense Dept. funding

## Research may generate \$2 billion a year for Memphis

By [Bartholomew Sullivan](#) ([Contact](#))

Friday, November 9, 2007

WASHINGTON -- A \$4 million earmark in the Defense Department appropriations conference report passed Thursday will fund a University of Tennessee Health Science Center biohazard containment laboratory in Memphis.

The dollar amount doubles the amount U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen sought, and the House passed, in July. All Greater Memphis members of Congress voted for the measure, which passed 400-15.

Dr. Robert R. Caudle, vice chancellor of health center affairs, said in July that the basic research the funding underwrites is aimed at detecting how different individuals respond differently to various infectious agents at the genetic and molecular level in order to detect them before victims show symptoms of illness.

Ultimately, the work is designed to detect and then find therapies and vaccines to ward off infections, he said. Caudle said it is likely the lab will seek ways for rapidly detecting known pathogens such as E. coli, tularemia, anthrax, multiple-drug-resistant tuberculosis, bird flu and the causes of hemorrhagic fevers.

Memphis will become one of only 13 regional biocontainment labs in the country. Cohen said he expects 30 to 50 scientific research positions to be created at the time of the lab's opening. He added that the Memphis Bioworks Foundation estimates the lab will have an economic impact of \$2 billion a year, creating 500 new jobs and \$250 million in annual salaries.

Its benefit to the Defense Department is the development of biosensors for diagnostic and triaging purposes. The lab is under construction at the site of the old Baptist Memorial Hospital on Union and is scheduled to be in operation by next summer.

Cohen sought the earmark for his district from U.S. Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa., chairman of the Defense Appropriations subcommittee. Cohen supported Murtha in his losing bid to be named majority leader in January.

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