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# BUSINESS

MARKETS ♦ HIGH TECH ♦ ECONOMY

## Sematech funds earmarked for environmental research

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President Bush is expected to sign an appropriations bill that earmarks \$10 million for the development of "environmentally safe" manufacturing processes in the semiconductor industry — a move environmentalists claim as a hard-fought victory.

The funding was part of the defense appropriations bill that cleared Congress on Monday. It provides \$100 million for chip-manufacturing research through Texas-based Sematech — the same amount as was allocated last year — but requires \$10 million of that sum to advance environmental research.

Sematech was founded five years ago as a government-industry consortium dedicated to improving U.S. competitiveness in chip making and in the manufacture of chip-making equipment. Contributions to Sematech from 12 major companies are matched, dollar for dollar, by the government, giving it an effective budget of \$200 million a year.

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— Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition

Environmental groups have been pushing for such an allocation — which also would double to \$20 million after the industry's expected match — confirming their view that the semiconductor industry has a serious problem with pollution.

"We've gone from having a toe in the door to having a seat at the table," said Ted Smith of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, a San Jose group that spearheaded the earmarking.

"The semiconductor industry has been touted as a clean industry but in fact uses some of the most dangerous materials in existence and has been the source of unprecedented environmental degradation and workplace hazards," Smith said. "One of the major foot-

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prints of the industry's development has been substantial groundwater contamination."

The congressional earmarking appears to recognize that the industry has had a troubling history of serious pollution. There are about 20 EPA Superfund cleanup sites in Silicon Valley — more than in any other single manufac-

turing region, Smith said.

Buddy Price, Sematech spokesman, said the consortium has been working on environmentally improved processes since its inception. It spent \$23 million developing vapor cleansing agents that eliminate the use of hazardous liquids to make chips, he said. And it has spent more than \$20 million designing systems that enable manufacturers to reuse dangerous chemicals.

Smith said his group, working with the Campaign for Responsible Technology, bypassed Sematech and went directly to Congress to ensure government money would advance research for clean technology.

"Not only is this significant as a precedent for the electronics industry, but for what it could mean to a federal industrial policy," he said.