

Consortium of Social Science Associations



Volume 20, Number 4

Celebrating 20 Years of Advocacy

February 26, 2001

NEW PRESIDENT TO ANNOUNCE BUDGET PLANS

Without a popular mandate from November's election, President Bush has nevertheless moved swiftly to put his stamp on the Chief Executive's office. Although he has yet to fill many important sub-cabinet posts, including Presidential Science Adviser, Bush has announced major initiatives in education reform, a thorough review of military strategy, and the cornerstone of his policies – the \$1.6 trillion tax cut.

On February 27 he will deliver a State of the Union-like address outlining his priorities for the budget and other issues. The following day the administration will release a Fiscal Year 2002 budget outline. A fully-detailed budget will arrive on April 3. The stated budget goal of the administration is to limit the growth of discretionary spending to inflation levels. With an announced 11 percent increase for education, and boosts for other favored agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, many other programs will suffer slight or non-existent increases, and in some cases decreases.

As with many previous administrations, leaks concerning agency budget proposals has occurred over the past few weeks. We have learned that the President expects to honor the commitment to double spending for health research. Bush has announced that he will ask for a \$2.8 billion increase for NIH. Whether this constitutes a doubling seems open to dispute. Senators Arlen Specter (R-PA) and Tom Harkin (D-IA), the two key players on NIH's Senate appropriation subcommittee, are calling for a \$3.4 billion increase to continue the doubling plan.

The news for the National Science Foundation is not as good. The President is expected to ask for only a one percent increase over FY 2001 levels. At the same time, Senators Kit Bond (R-MO) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), the key actors for NSF's Senate appropriation subcommittee, appear committed to their goal of doubling the basic science (see *Budget*, page 5)

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY RESPOND TO NBAC REPORT

Commending the National Bioethics Advisory Commission for its "ambitious and impressive undertaking," the social and behavioral science community responded to the Commission's request for comments on its report, *Ethical and Policy Issues in Research Involving Human Participants*. (See *Update*, December 11, 2000.)

There is much that COSSA agrees with in the report, but we are troubled about a number of the issues raised and some of the recommendations, stated COSSA's Executive Director Howard Silver. "Although we understand that the recommendations . . . are designed to provide for a major change in the system, our primary question is whether the new system recommended for adoption by the Commission is the optimal system to protect human research participants without unduly burdening researchers," said Silver.

The social and behavioral science community also expressed its concern with the tone of NBAC's report. L. Michael Honaker, Chief Operating Officer of the American Psychological Association (APA), noted that it implies "that investigators will not conduct sound, ethical research in the absence of detailed regulation and monitoring. While occurrences of extreme and dramatic abuses have been well-publicized, such behavior is not (see *Report*, page 5)

Inside *UPDATE* . . .

- Evans Pulls Sampling Authority from Census Director
- Members of Congress Tackle Exit Polling
- Ag Committee Calls on Economists to Review Policy
- Herbert Simon, Social/Behavioral Polymath, Dies
- COSSA Welcomes New Affiliates
- Sources of Research Support

EVANS PULLS SAMPLING AUTHORITY FROM CENSUS DIRECTOR

In a widely expected but controversial move, Secretary of Commerce Donald Evans rescinded the Census Director's authority to decide whether to release statistically-corrected data, effectively giving that authority to himself.

Norman Mineta, Secretary of Commerce under President Clinton, delegated this decision to the Director of the Census Bureau in September of last year "to ensure that politics are not a part of this important decision" (see *Update*, October 9, 2000). Those who support the use of corrected data (mostly Democrats) for redistricting and distributing federal funds see it as a way to return representation and social services to those (mostly minorities, infants, and children) who are missed by an imperfect Census. Those who oppose (mostly Republicans) see it as an effort to skew redistricting in the Democrats' favor (see *Update*, January 9, 2001).

Subcommittee Examines Census 2000 Report Card

Evans' decision was announced February 16, just two days after the House Subcommittee on the Census brought Acting Census Director Bill Barron to the Hill to testify on the results of the 2000 Census. Barron confirmed to the subcommittee and the packed hearing room that Census 2000 was

indeed a great success. Having analyzed the first results from the Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation (ACE), the Bureau found an improvement in the population coverage and reductions in the undercounts of some groups.

Democratic and Republican members both hailed the success of Census 2000, but used it to make different arguments. Subcommittee Chairman Dan Miller (R-FL) said that Census 2000 was so successful that sampling is unnecessary. Ranking Member Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) disagreed, stressing that the preliminary results do not reveal how the undercounted are distributed, and that three to four million people missed, though an improvement from the last Census, is unacceptable.

Democrats fear that the accomplishments of Census 2000 will be invoked to justify the use of raw, or unadjusted, data. Although few were surprised by Evans' announcement, the Presidential Members of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board expressed their strong disappointment in a February 20 press conference. The Bush Administration "delegated unto itself" the decision on releasing adjusted figures, said Everett Ehrlich, one of the Presidential Members. Evoking memories of the 2000 election, Ehrlich declared, "we must not have a stolen Census." He urged that the decision be left in the hands of the professionals at the Bureau.

Researchers Brought to the Front Lines

Evans has not officially announced a decision on releasing adjusted data, but it is widely expected he will decide against their release. To illuminate the ramifications of such a decision, the Presidential Members invited a panel of independent researchers to present their findings.

In general, the researchers confirmed that those missed by the Census tend to be unrepresentative of the population – they are likely to be unevenly distributed by age, race, income, and geography. Beth Osborne Daponte of Carnegie Mellon University found that in the 1990 Census (in which adjusted figures were not employed) one in five infants were missed; she concluded that in the 2000 Census, infants are more likely to have been missed than the population at large. Paul Ong of UCLA found a systematic pattern of undercounting commuters who use public transportation. Ted Jojolo of the University of New Mexico revealed

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Executive Director:	Howard J. Silver
Government Affairs:	Angela L. Sharpe
Public Affairs:	Chris F. Ryan
Govt. Affairs Ass't:	John A. Wertman
President:	Janet L. Norwood

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences.

Update is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$80; institutional subscriptions - \$160; overseas mail - \$160. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA: 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

www.cossa.org

that Native Americans have historically been the most undercounted racial group. The tendency for such groups to be undercounted compromises their access to health care, education, public transportation, and other vital services, the researchers found.

Examining the geography of the undercounted, Chris Williamson, a University of Southern California geographer, determined the specific effects of an undercount in Long Beach, California (population: 500,000). In the 1990 Census, 3.7 percent of the population of that city was not counted. Because the Secretary of Commerce rejected the use of adjusted data for that Census, Williamson calculated that the people of Long Beach missed out on several nurses, an extra bus, half of a police officer, thousands of library books, millions of dollars (over the decade), and the improved public safety and city planning that more accurate data would have allowed.

Allan Lichtman of American University stressed the cumulative effects of failing to correct an undercount. Not only are the impacts felt for an entire decade, as the Census is decennial, but they are cumulative, he said, since redistricting uses the previous Census boundaries as a baseline in drawing new ones. Interestingly, Lichtman also downplayed the partisan ramifications of using corrected data for redistricting, claiming that the conventional wisdom that Democrats stand to gain at the expense of Republicans is an absolute myth. The impact, he said, is not on Congress but in state legislatures.

The Census Bureau will make a recommendation on releasing adjusted data by March 1. Evans will then make the decision on whether to release the data within five days. The data, adjusted or raw, will then go to the states for redistricting.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TACKLE EXIT POLLING

The House Energy and Commerce Committee, chaired by Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA), convened a hearing on February 14 to investigate what caused major errors in the network news election day coverage of the Florida presidential vote. Witnesses for the hearing were divided into two panels: one, a group of experts assembled by CNN and the Voter News Service (VNS) to study coverage flaws, and the other, the heads of seven major news sources. During the proceedings, Members of Congress, led by Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), and the expert witnesses attacked the VNS, a consortium run by the major networks that uses prior election results, certified vote tallies, and exit polling data to project election winners throughout the country.

Paul Biemer, a statistician with the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), and Joan Konner, Dean Emerita of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, testified as part of the first panel that the use of exit polling should be carefully examined, and possibly discontinued, in order to avoid future errors. Biemer was one of six RTI statisticians and survey methodologists commissioned by the VNS to review its election night practices; Konner was one of three veteran journalists assembled by CNN to examine its faulty election coverage.

Biemer related that the statistical reliance on exit polls involved in VNS models didn't rise to a level of adequate certainty. He went on to say that these models were subject to statistical bias, and that this bias must be corrected in future methodology. Konner was even harsher in her criticism of the use of exit polling as a basis for network projections. She asserted that this type of sampling will continue to foster error and that certified results released by state secretary of state offices are the only safe tallies to use when projecting winners. She did, however, urge the continuation of exit polling as a means to study demographic voting trends.

The News executives, representing ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox, CNN, the VNS, and the AP, agreed that they had made serious mistakes in their election coverage and expressed concern at a possible loss of credibility among their consumers. They also endorsed a bill introduced by Markey and Rep. Chris Cox (R-CA) that would institute a nationwide uniform poll closing time of 9 p.m. EST for

presidential elections. But they harshly criticized the Committee for holding the hearing, asserting that it came dangerously close to an infringement on freedom of the press.

Note: COSSA will host a seminar on election reform. It will be held on March 16th from 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. in Room B338 of the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington. For more information, contact socscience@aol.com.

AG COMMITTEE CALLS ON ECONOMISTS TO REVIEW POLICY

The House Committee on Agriculture heard testimony from three agricultural economists on the current state of the farm economy and the economic impact of federal policy on agriculture. The Committee is seeking guidance as it begins work on replacing the 1996 Farm Bill.

The context of today's farm economy is one of generally weak markets and low prices, noted Keith Collins, Chief Economist of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in the February 14 hearing. He explained that production agriculture has been particularly vulnerable to foreign competition, a strong dollar, economic recession in foreign countries, and increases in energy costs. The low prices and weather-related problems that producers have faced were made easier, Collins said, by Congressional provisions of nearly \$25 billion over the past three years under the Farm Bill.

Looking to the future, Collins expects agricultural exports to rise as free trade progresses, the dollar weakens, and world demand rises. Rising exports and higher prices, Collins said, will improve the farm sector, as long as reduced government payments do not exceed these expected gains.

Daryll Ray, an agricultural economist at the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center at the University of Tennessee, took a different perspective. Blaming low prices and low market incomes in crop agriculture on short-term factors like exchange rates and energy prices, Ray said, reflects denial and the implication that once the short-term disruption is remedied, agriculture will be just fine. Rather, he stressed, "discussion should not center on this or that disruption, but on the ability of

agricultural markets to make adjustments . . . irrespective of the exact nature of the disruption."

Examining the responsiveness of agriculture to economic factors, Ray argued that agriculture is a unique sector – supply tends to grow rapidly, even in the absence of increased demand and in the presence of price declines, and demand is unresponsive to price changes. Because of these factors, he said, we can expect prices and income in agriculture to be chronically depressed.

The inevitable result of leaving agriculture to itself, Ray concluded, would be a continued downward spiral, "wreaking devastation on all rural areas."

Bruce Gardner of the University of Maryland voiced a similar assessment of the state of today's farm economy. In drawing policy recommendations, Gardner advocated a two-pronged strategy in which individual farmers and the industry as a whole are helped separately.

Specifically, Gardner urged the committee to address broader rural issues in a targeted set of human development programs that offer education and health services to all rural residents. He also stressed the importance of continuing efforts in research, technology development, and technical education in order to remedy market failures, protect environmental resources, and support the safe and well-guided development of biotechnology. Finally, Gardner urged caution in implementing commodity support programs, recommending that they do not attempt to micromanage markets or the decisions of farmers and that they not subsidize riskier production methods.

HERBERT SIMON, SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE POLYMATH, DIES

Herbert Simon, a social/behavioral science polymath and Nobel Prizewinner in Economics, died on February 9 at the age of 84. Simon had also received accolades for his work in political science and cognitive science.

Professor Simon, who described his life's intellectual journey in a fascinating memoir, *Models of My Life*, began his professional life as a political scientist, earning a Ph.D. from the University of

Chicago in 1942. His interest in decision-making led him to write *Administrative Behavior*, which posited his idea of “bounded rationality” and introduced the term “satisficing” to the lexicon. This work and these ideas earned him his Nobel Prize in 1978.

By that time, Simon had moved on to become a Professor in Psychology and Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. Working with Allan Newell, his colleague at Carnegie Mellon, he laid the groundwork for the new discipline of cognitive science, produced many of the early computer simulations, and explored how computers could operate as intelligent machines, earning him the title of “father of artificial intelligence.”

In March of 1989, Simon presented testimony to the House Science, Research, and Technology Subcommittee and became one of the first people to publicly endorse the idea of a separate directorate for the Social and Behavioral Sciences at the National Science Foundation. He also suggested that these sciences were the true “hard” sciences. The separate Directorate became a reality in late 1991.

In September of 2000, he returned home to political science, receiving the John Gaus prize in public administration from the American Political Science Association. Simon delivered something of a valedictory address reviewing how his theories have held up over the years. Unusual for academics, Simon received a standing ovation both before and after the speech.

A member of the President’s Science Advisory Committee, one of the first social scientists admitted to the National Academy of Sciences, and a winner of the National Medal of Science, Simon will be missed greatly.

COSSA WELCOMES NEW AFFILIATES

COSSA welcomes two new affiliates: the Justice Research and Statistics Association and the Southern Political Science Association. We look forward to working with both of these organizations.

(BUDGET, from page 1)

agency’s budget in the next five years. Reflecting this, the Coalition for National Science Funding has called for a 15 percent increase for NSF for FY 2002.

Surprising some folks, President Bush has apparently decided not to increase the military’s budget above the boost planned by President Clinton. Congress and the Joint Chiefs, however, may have other ideas.

As noted, many other agencies are expected to suffer. The Department of Justice had been asked to figure out how to reduce its budget by \$1 billion. Attorney General John Ashcroft has protested, but it remains to be seen if he was successful. The Department of Agriculture has also been asked to figure out ways to reduce its spending.

With a split Senate, a closely divided House, and a Congress concerned with preserving its prerogatives on spending decisions, as usual the budget game should get very interesting.

(REPORT, from page 1)

characteristic of the vast majority of scientific investigators.” APA strongly recommended that the “needs and sensitivities of investigators receive sufficient acknowledgement throughout the NBAC document . . . [which] can be accomplished without compromising the standards for participant welfare and rights.”

Agreeing with NBAC that maintaining the office within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) signals that the new system remains centered in a biomedical model, COSSA supports the creation of an independent office outside the agency. “Since much of social and behavioral science research is conducted with support from other agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, we believe that an independent office will better serve the needs of all agencies. It is essential, however, that the new entity has an advisory committee that includes a significant number of members from outside the biomedical sciences. This would allow for sufficient nonbiomedical-centered input into how the new office would operate,” Silver explained.

The American Sociological Association (ASA) “also believes that the current human subjects protection system as it has developed over more than 20 years would benefit from revisiting, in light of limitations of the past, the growing fault lines between how it should operate and how it does, and the changing demands and complexity of research involving human interactions,” emphasized ASA Executive Director Felice Levine in the Association’s comments to NBAC.

Additional Deliberation Urged

Levine urged NBAC to undergo “substantially more deliberation before introducing widespread change.” The draft report “does not directly address how the system needs altering to achieve the goal of creating a revised system for the protection of human subjects that encompasses all research involving human interactions with researchers — irrespective of funding source and area of inquiry — especially for the social and behavioral sciences,” she said. “Especially because the NBAC report calls for expansion, it needs to do so fully appreciative of ethical considerations as they present themselves in the social and behavioral sciences. The report also needs to emphasize the importance of full participation of social and behavioral scientists in all aspects of any system for the protection of research participants,” Levine stressed.

The APA commended the NBAC draft report, applauding the goal of “creating a set of universal principles that are then flexibly applied, as appropriate, to the wide range of disciplinary and individual research contexts.” Honaker noted that it is “extremely informative, both to those who are not familiar with current research policy and its development as well as those who are experts in primary ethical issues pertaining to research with human participants.”

The APA described the draft report recommendations as extremely constructive and useful in outlining issues and mechanisms to ensure that the rights and welfare of research participants are well-protected; however they and the other social and behavioral science organizations emphasized that “the orientation, issues, and examples are primarily derived from and directed toward biomedical and clinical research.” Accordingly, says Honaker, this “diminishes the appropriateness for and applicability to the minimal or less-than-

minimal-risk research that forms the bulk of the research conducted in the behavioral and social sciences . . . We suggest that the report explicitly address differences between behavioral and biomedical research in several ways: by including examples from behavioral and social science fields; by further noting that definitions of risk and harm differ qualitatively across behavioral and biomedical interventions; and by additional discussion of mechanisms for oversight of minimal risk.”

Louise Lamphere, President of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), recommended that NBAC “acknowledge in the report that social and behavioral science research and the humanities pose no or minimal risk of harm to human participants and, unless otherwise indicated, qualify for administrative IRB [Institutional Review Board] review.” This would be an expedited process, but would not exempt any research from review, as is currently possible under the common rule.

Catherine Rudder, Executive Director of the American Political Science Association (APSA), observed that NBAC’s draft report “erroneously concludes that research exempted from IRB review is spared from meeting ethical standards. There is no evidence that social science research currently exempted under the Common Rule has spawned research that has endangered human participants. While the draft report acknowledges that social scientists have disciplinary codes of ethics, it discounts the fact that political scientists and their peers in other social sciences abide by their disciplinary codes, the fundamental principle of which is to do no harm to the research participant.”

Calls for Additional Training for IRBs

Given that COSSA’s main objection with the current system is the role of IRBs, Silver stressed that it is essential that their members have appropriate expertise in the research areas that they are reviewing. “Individuals who serve on IRBs should not only receive training, education, and certification in ethics, but should have substantive scientific knowledge and methodological skills as well,” Silver explained.

Similarly, APSA emphasized that “members with only a passing knowledge of other disciplines’ methods are inadequate for the tasks envisioned for

them . . . The ‘educational’ programs proposed by the draft report cannot compensate for the lack of training.” If all research is to be reviewed under the NBAC draft report’s plan, “the rules should clearly provide that social scientists, behavioral scientists, and scholars from the humanities should each be represented in sufficient numbers among IRB members,” Rudder maintained.

There is clear opposition to NBAC’s recommendation that 50 percent of IRB members consist of “non-scientist, non-institution members.” Such a ratio detracts from the peer review aspect of research, observed Silver. All of the organizations were adamant in their view that the most important issue is the competence of IRB members in methods and topics of the research under review. Nevertheless, there is community support for an increased number of public members.

The bedrock of a human participant protection system needs to link sound knowledge about research ethics with sound knowledge of research, argued ASA’s Levine. “If anything, the social and behavioral sciences have not always received adequate review because of insufficient expertise regarding ethical principles as they apply to social and behavioral study.” While NBAC’s motivation is well-intentioned, public participation can and should be meaningfully included without compromising the presence of specialized ethical and scientific expertise.

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) registered its concern that “certification may entail standardized tests written to serve the biomedical research community, and that social and behavioral sciences’ perspective and concerns may be absent from certification standards.” Likewise, while the role for professional societies is recognized in the educational component, there is no discussion within the report of how professional societies may assist in the oversight process, Lamphere added. The AAA recommended that NBAC identify key roles for professional societies to play in the proposed accreditation and certification process (see *Update*, January 9, 2001).

Increased Funding for Research on Ethics Training Needed

Finally, the social and behavioral science community supported the need for increased federal

funding for research ethics training. To thoroughly educate scientists and IRBs, opportunities for the best research ethicists to produce educational materials need to be increased, all the groups asserted.

NBAC’s draft report can be found at www.bioethics.gov. Copies of the social and behavioral science community’s comments can be found on COSSA’s website at www.COSSA.org/NBAC.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Seeks Grant Proposals

The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) will award up to five grants of up to \$20,000 each to support research for the 2001-2002 academic year. The grants encourage the use of the National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF). The NSAF is an initiative of the Urban Institute and is “an important data resource for research on issues related to poverty, welfare, health care, economic development, and social and family policy.”

Preference will be given to proposals “that demonstrate the potential to improve understanding of the social and economic issues affecting America’s disadvantaged families and neighborhoods, and to provide insights into their circumstances and efforts to overcome obstacles to their progress and success.”

Applicants must have a Ph.D. at the time of award and apply through an academic institution or other qualified nonprofit research organization. Applications must be postmarked by Friday, **March 30, 2001**. See www.appam.org or contact APPAM at appam@ui.urban.org or 202/261-5788.

Correction: In the February 12 issue of *Update*, we incorrectly attributed the report, *New Horizons in Health: An Integrative Approach* to the Institute of Medicine. The report was in fact produced by the National Research Council’s Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. COSSA regrets the error.