

Testimony of Howard Silver, Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), to the House Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, House Appropriations Committee. Honorable Alan Mollohan, Chairman. April 2, 2008.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Howard Silver and I am the Executive Director of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA). The Consortium represents over 110 professional associations, scientific societies, universities and research institutes concerned with the promotion of and funding for research in the social, behavioral and economic sciences. COSSA functions as a bridge between the research world and the Washington community. A list of COSSA's membership is attached.

Like you, COSSA was disappointed in some of the final numbers in the FY 2008 Consolidated Appropriations Act. We had hoped the Administration and the Congress could agree on an overall number that would have allowed you to maintain some of the early promising increases for the National Science Foundation and other agencies. We hope the FY 2009 process will work more smoothly.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed FY 2009 budgets for the National Science Foundation (NSF), for which we recommend at least \$6.85 billion; the Bureau of Economic Analysis, for which we support the proposed budget of \$86.9 million; the Census Bureau, for which we recommend whatever funds, both regular and “emergency” appropriations, that may be necessary to ensure a fair and accurate Census and protect the Bureau’s other data collection activities; the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), for which we seek \$50 million in program funds, and Bureau of Justice Statistics (NIJ), for which we urge \$50 million in program funds. COSSA is well aware that each year you confront difficult choices among competing agencies under the Subcommittee’s jurisdiction. We hope that you will give these agencies’ needs generous consideration.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF)

COSSA strongly recommends that NSF receive at least the President’s request of \$6.85 billion in FY 2008. We recognize that this is below the authorized level of \$7.33 billion, that would double NSF’s budget in seven years, but we are realistic. We also strongly support the Research and Related Activities request of \$5.594 billion.

We realize the NSF FY 2009 budget proposal is driven by the Administration’s American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI). And we know that the ACI grew out of the National Academies’ *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* (RAGS) report. Both of these have asserted that reinvigorating the physical sciences and engineering are a national priority. Yet, there are admonitions from the RAGS report, from the language in the FY 2008 appropriations report, for which we are grateful to this Subcommittee, and from the COMPETES Act, that the social, behavioral and economic (SBE) sciences should not be left behind. COSSA believes the NSF’s FY 2008 allocation and the FY 2009 request suggest that is what is happening. There is no apparent increase in the FY 2008 current plan for the SBE directorate and its FY 2009 proposed increase of \$18 eighteen million pales in comparison to the \$235 million boost for the physical

and mathematical sciences. NSF is extremely important for federal support for basic research in the SBE sciences. For some fields in these sciences, NSF is the only source of federal support for basic research and infrastructure development.

Now is also a time when advances in methodologies, computing power, and interdisciplinary cooperation are helping SBE scientists produce significant results. We need sustained support for the new modes of research, such as collaborations, economic and political laboratories, merged databases, functional MRIs, and virtual centers that have transformed SBE research.

The social and behavioral research portfolio is enormous and supports science of tremendous intellectual excitement and substantial societal importance. Let me list a number of areas, far from a comprehensive list, where social and behavioral research plays a significant role in addressing America's and the world's problems.

- 1) The Brain/Behavioral Interface – neuroeconomics, law and neuroscience, biomarkers
- 2) Ethical, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) –
Information Technology – privacy, human-machine interfacing
Nanotechnology – regulatory and safety considerations
- 3) Climate Change
Human Dimensions, International Politics, Land Use, Coupled Natural and
Human Systems
- 4) Energy
Behavior Changes for Conservation – Science Committee Hearing
Biofuel Impact on Rural America
- 5) Developing Human Capital
Language and Other Learning, Skill Formation, Changing Workforce.
- 6) Social Networks – terrorism, teen sexual behavior
- 7) Decision Making – under uncertainty, risk taking and risk aversion
- 8) Organizational Change – virtual organizations, flat pyramids, telecommuting
- 9) Public Health – obesity, health disparities, lifestyle choices
- 10) A Fair Society – broadening participation and enhancing diversity
- 11) A Safe Society – crime and criminal justice
- 12) Changing Demographics
International Aspects – global aging, migration, birth and death Rates
U.S. – internal shifts, immigration
Changing Family Structure
- 13) Global Issues – Conflict and Cooperation, Terrorism, Differential Economic Growth,
Compatibility of Economic and Political Freedom

As you can recognize, many of these are issues the Congress deals with constantly. Social and behavioral research provides you with answers to many of these vexing problems. Yet, at budget time, we are relatively poor orphans.

Admittedly not all of these issues are related to NSF's agenda. However, basic research on individual, group, and societal behavior is the underpinning for much of the knowledge and insight that policy makers bring to coping with these issues. Of course, we understand, as

political science studies have shown, that research results are not the only consideration used by policy makers.

Some specific SBE-related programs continue, such as the initiative on the Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP). These studies examine how national research and development systems work, how to measure and nurture innovation, and how to direct the nation's investments. Two major competitions have been solicited, generating high demand, and more will follow. Unfortunately, the FY 2008 lack of a spending increase affected the ability of this program to fund some excellent proposals.

The Foundation-wide, SBE-managed, priority called Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) has come to an end. HSD supported projects that investigated the dynamics of human action and development, as well as knowledge about organizational, cultural, and societal adaptation and change. It utilized multidisciplinary research teams and comprehensive, interdisciplinary approaches across the sciences. Two major HSD foci will continue as part of the core programs within SBE: environmental research and the development of international, integrated, microdata sets to enhance analysis of both national and global attitudes and trends.

SBE maintains its support for major long-term data bases such as the Panel Study on Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey, and the American National Election Studies. These three extraordinary sets of time-series data continue to paint a portrait of American's economic, social, and political attitudes and behavior over five decades, while updating their methodology and expanding their scope.

With regard to the Education and Human Resources directorate (EHR), COSSA believes that broadening participation in science, across ALL the sciences, is a worthy endeavor. We support NSF's programs to ensure that all students get a chance to become scientists; including SBE scientists. COSSA recently organized and led a full-day retreat on *Enhancing Diversity in the Sciences* with the participation of representatives from professional associations, scientific societies, NSF, and NIH. Information about the retreat can be found at www.cossa.org

We strongly support the 32 percent proposed budget increase for NSF's Graduate Education programs to provide more fellowships. These have been extremely important for budding scientists across all the disciplines. We also believe in programs that will enhance the quality of teaching in our K-12 system, not only for math and science, but for all subjects. It is clear from NAEP and other tests that American students need help across-the-board.

We also strongly support funding for EHR research that evaluates the effectiveness of these programs and enhances their ability to get the job done right. We also believe that STEM education cannot be done in isolation from social, economic, and cultural factors that influence our education system and its students. The SBE sciences are in the forefront of providing research and evidence for improving how our children learn and survive in the modern, complex societies in which we live. NSF's Science of Learning Centers program is an important part of this and COSSA strongly supports the continued funding of these Centers found in the Integrated Activities account.

THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU and BUREAU OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

COSSA is a member of the 2010 Census Advisory Committee and as we move toward that redesigned short-form Census, the large increase proposed for the Bureau's FY 2009 budget becomes imperative if we are to get the count right. We are aware that there are difficulties surrounding the preparations for 2010, particularly with regard to the use of handheld devices to verify addresses and to conduct the nonresponse follow up. We hope that Congress and the Bureau can cooperate to ensure that these problems are straightened out.

Nonetheless, the Census is constitutionally mandated and has an important impact on reapportionment, redistricting, and the distribution of federal and state funds. So we must make every effort and spend whatever is necessary to make sure we get a fair and accurate count.

In addition, the other regular activities at the Census Bureau should not suffer as a result of the difficulties with the preparations for 2010. The American Community Survey (ACS) has allowed the decennial to become a short-form census and ACS' annual data collections also provide timelier information for use by state and local governments and businesses. The other Bureau activities are also important to maintaining our economic statistical databases that play an important role in employment policy, housing policy, and economic policy and their funding should be sufficient.

COSSA also supports the increase proposed for the FY 2009 Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) that continues the development of measures of investment in R&D and other knowledge-based activities in order to incorporate them into the nation's GDP. BEA also maintains the nation's current income accounts, an important tool for economic policy making.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (NIJ) and the BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS (BJS)

As your recent hearing with the Office of Justice Programs on March 11 demonstrated, references to the studies and data collections of NIJ and BJS do not necessarily translate into increased budget support. In recent years, these agencies have seen their budgets stagnate and in some years go down. We appreciate this Subcommittee's support of the FY 2008 increase for BJS and the strong report language regarding the importance of the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). We ask for enhanced resources for these agencies in FY 2009, \$50 million in program funds for each agency. The cost of crime to victims and to society is far out of proportion to the budget for research studies and the collection and analysis of data that are essential to understanding how to effect change with regard to crime and criminal justice.

As you know, the National Academies' Committee on National Statistics has been reviewing BJS' programs. In early January they released their report *Surveying Victims: Options for Conducting the National Crime Victimization Survey*. In many years, NCVS takes up to 60 percent of the BJS budget.

The Committee found that “as currently configured and funded, the NCVS is not achieving and cannot achieve BJS’ legislatively mandated goal to ‘collect and analyze data that will serve as a continuous and comparable national social indication of the prevalence, incidence, rates, extent, distribution, and attributes of crime.’” They recommend that BJS needs additional funds to “generate accurate measures of victimization, which are as important to understanding crime in the U.S. as the UCR measure of crimes reported to the police.” Additional resources will also permit NCVS to provide sub-national data, a sticking point for many practitioners regarding the NCVS.

BJS is also responsible for critical national criminal justice statistical programs that include data on correctional populations and facilities; courts and sentencing; prosecution; civil justice; sex offender registries; and criminal history records. Under the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Improvement Act of 2007, BJS now has an expanded role in improving background checks for firearms purchasers. BJS also provides support to Statistical Analysis Centers in 53 states and territories through the State Justice Statistics (SJS) program, which fulfills part of BJS’ mandate to support state statistical efforts. It needs more resources for this expanded agenda.

As noted at your OJP hearing on March 11, the recent increases in crime are not uniform across America. Many large cities continue to show declines, while medium-size cities and rural areas are experiencing difficulties. There are many possible explanations and the sorting out process continues. But it is clear that strategies that worked in some places, “hot spots,” community policing, crime mapping, are not working in others. The re-entry of former prison inmates into the general population creates more concerns. COSSA is sponsoring a session on Friday April 4 starting at 8:30 a.m. in B-340 RHOB on *Violent Crime: What’s Happening and Why*. Distinguished criminologists and a former judge will discuss this problem. NIJ needs more resources to support further explorations of this differentiation that now marks criminal activity.

The National Academies’ has also begun a study of NIJ’s research activities. COSSA testified to that panel in December of last year. The NIJ social science portfolio has been limited in recent years, as budgets have decreased and the fascination with technological fixes continues. COSSA has nothing against technology, but as has been proven in so many areas, human behavior and social conditions often thwart technology-driven solutions and thus the focus, we believe has to shift.

In July of each year, NIJ convenes a large R&D conference that examines major issues facing the criminal justice community. It is a special opportunity to bring together scientists, practitioners, and policy makers to interact and cooperate on setting research agendas.

Again, I understand that this is expected to be another difficult year for the appropriations’ process. COSSA hopes that when you consider the FY 2009 funding for the agencies I discussed, you will treat them as generously as you can.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.