

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. March 27, 2009.

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.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed FY 2010 budgets for the National Science Foundation (NSF), for which we recommend at least \$7 billion; the Bureau of Economic Analysis, for which we support a \$5 million increase; the Census Bureau, for which we support the President's request of a \$4 billion increase to conduct the 2010 decennial count and sufficient funding for the Bureau's other data collection activities; the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), for which we seek \$55 million in program funds, and Bureau of Justice Statistics (NIJ), for which we urge \$55 million in program funds.

President Obama made clear in his preliminary FY 2010 budget document that: "Investments in science and technology foster economic growth; create millions of high-tech, high-wage jobs that allow American workers to lead the global economy; improve the quality of life for all Americans; and strengthen our national security." All of the above-mentioned agencies are part of government-supported research and data activities. They will help fulfill the President's vision for science and contribute to a better America and world.

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)

First, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Subcommittee and the rest of the House leadership for their successful efforts on behalf of science in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The \$3 billion for NSF in ARRA, and particularly, the \$2 billion for the Research and Related Activities account, will help fund more excellent science projects across all the disciplines that NSF supports and help correct the dismal success rates that limited NSF budgets have created in recent years.

The goal for NSF funding should be the sustainability of science funding across time. With the infusion of ARRA funds, COSSA, as the President has requested, recommends that the Committee appropriate at least \$7 billion for NSF in FY 2010. NSF should continue on the path enacted in the America COMPETES Act and receive close to the eight percent increase envisioned in that law. Using the same reasoning, COSSA recommends \$5.6 billion for the

Research and Related Activities account and \$912 million for the Education and Human Resources directorate.

We also are grateful to the Subcommittee for its support of ALL the disciplines that NSF funds. As you are aware, the America COMPETES Act makes clear that the social, behavioral and economic (SBE) sciences are an integral part of NSF and should receive funding increases commensurate with the exciting opportunities occurring in those areas. 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.

The recently released National Science and Technology Council report, “Social, Behavioral and Economic Research in the Federal Context,” documents the foundational research themes, priority research focus areas, and the policy relevant areas of investigation that are driving these sciences (http://www.ostp.gov/cs/nstc/documents_reports). As the report notes, “The SBE sciences are focused on human activity at every level –from an individual’s brain, to behavior, to the actions of groups and organizations.” All this research is now conducted with advances in methodologies, computing power, and interdisciplinary cooperation, which help SBE scientists produce significant results. These sciences are moving forward with improved methods for collecting and managing data, building more integrated systems to allow for sharing across data sets, and a continued focus on scientific questions that have policy implications. 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. One of the areas highlighted in the NSTC report is understanding the complexity of human societies and activities. This requires a systems approach that integrates data and analyses over the whole range of human sciences, from neuroscience and psychology to political science, economics, geography, anthropology, linguistics, and sociology. As the report indicates, one of the exciting ways this is utilized is the development of network models that have enabled visualizations of the webs and inter-organizational ties that foster the spread of information, idea and microbes within and across populations (see SCIENCE Magazine, February 13, 2009). In addition, multi-level modeling has led to analyses of the impact of community change on individual outcomes; and simulation modeling advances have allowed the integration of knowledge from a multitude of studies on specific behavioral, societal and biological mechanisms that affect an entire ecosystem. The latter is extremely important as the nation and the world cope with the impacts of climate change.

The new Administration has made research on climate change and alternative energy a priority. In recent years, report after report from the National Academies, the U.S. Climate Research Program, the NOAA Advisory Board, and the IPCC, has called for more investment in the human dimensions of global climate change. SBE has recently issued a new solicitation for Decision Making Under Uncertainty, a key part of climate change research, that will allow for

the continued investigation of human behavior and decision making. This an area of research for which the psychologist Daniel Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in Economics.

The NSTC report also makes clear that “research in the human sciences relies heavily on the generation of high quality longitudinal data gathered in surveys.” SBE continues 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.

SBE remains committed to funding 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 occurred, generating high demand, and more will follow. Recently, SBE has determined that the implementation by science agencies of the ARRA funding is a natural experiment that SciSIP researchers could study. SBE is encouraging proposals for these investigations under its RAPID funding mechanism.

Furthermore, as new technologies such as nanoscience and engineering move forward, the ethical, legal, environmental, and social implications remain a key concern. SBE continues to remain at the forefront of supporting such studies through its Science and Society program.

Finally, the policy relevance and societal impact of SBE research is enormous. As Congress and the Administration deal with education, energy and the environment, health, cooperation and conflict among nations and people, and societal resilience and response to natural disasters and terrorism, reliance on the results of SBE research will be large. Social and behavioral research help provide the answers to many of these vexing problems. Thus, at budget time, we ask for our fair share of the funding.

With regard to the Education and Human Resources directorate (EHR), COSSA believes that broadening participation in science, across ALL the sciences, is important. We support NSF’s programs to ensure that all students get a chance to become scientists; including SBE scientists. COSSA has taken the lead in organizing the science community’s efforts to enhancing diversity in the sciences. COSSA held a retreat in February 2008 with the participation of representatives from professional associations, scientific societies, NSF, and NIH. On March 12, 2009, COSSA, with the support of many scientific societies, sponsored a briefing on Capitol Hill. The report from the retreat and a summary of the congressional event can be found at www.cossa.org

We strongly agree with President Obama’s support to “triple the number of graduate fellowships in science to help spur the next generation of home-grown scientific innovation.” We know the Subcommittee had difficulty accepting the large increase in NSF’s graduate fellowship program in FY 2009. We hope those difficulties will be overcome for FY 2010. COSSA also supports 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 the National Assessment of Educational Progress (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 its programs. Further, COSSA believes that STEM education cannot be done in isolation from social, economic, and cultural factors that influence our education system and its students. In addition, 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.

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, we support the large increase proposed for the Bureau's FY 2010 budget. We are encouraged by recently-confirmed Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke's testimony that the 2010 count will get done with the "right people...working with absolute vigor." As you know, the Census is constitutionally mandated and has an important impact on reapportionment, redistricting, and the distribution of federal and state funds. Thus, we must make every effort and spend whatever is necessary to make sure we get a fair and accurate count.

COSSA thanks the Subcommittee for its support of the anomaly in the FY 2009 Continuing Resolution that appropriated the full amount to keep the preparations for the 2010 count on track. COSSA also is grateful for the extra \$1 billion for the Census in the ARRA. We urge you to concur with the President's request providing over \$4 billion of additional funding "in order to ensure the Census Bureau will have the resources it needs to complete the 2010 Decennial Census effectively, efficiently, and on time." As the President pointed out, "the decennial census is the Nation's largest peacetime mobilization, and will entail the hiring of approximately half a million temporary workers, as well as extensive advertising and partnership activities to encourage participation by hard-to-reach populations and completion of an accurate count." COSSA now hopes that he will soon appoint a Director of the Census Bureau to lead that effort.

In addition, the other regular activities at the Census Bureau should not suffer as a result of 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 the 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 increases in the FY 2010 appropriation for Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). A part of the Commerce Department and the federal statistical system, BEA produces economic accounts' data that enable government and business decision-makers, researchers, and the American public to follow and understand the performance of the Nation's economy. This is of major importance in these perilous economic times. BEA also needs to return to developing measures of investment in R&D and other knowledge-based activities in order to incorporate them into the nation's GDP.

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

The NIJ and BJS are the research and statistics arms of the Department of Justice (DOJ). COSSA appreciates your support for increased budgets for these agencies in FY 2009 and the report language touting the importance of enhancing the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) as recommended in the National Academies' Committee on National Statistics report *Surveying Victims: Options for Conducting the National Crime Victimization Survey*.

For FY 2010, COSSA requests further enhancements to the budgets of these two agencies. One idea is to provide NIJ a one percent set-aside of funds from the budgets for the Office of Justice Programs, Office of Violence Against Women, and the COPS program for evaluation studies and other important research. As you know, the cost of crime to victims and to society far exceeds the budget for research studies and the collection and analysis of data essential to understanding how to affect change with regard to crime and criminal justice. In addition, as your panel's recent hearings on prisoner re-entry demonstrated, there is a lot of work to do to discover how programs are working and what else needs to be done. NIJ also needs to develop a long-term research agenda that would include longitudinal studies. Like Congress, COSSA also awaits the results of the National Academies' review of NIJ.

BJS funding remains deficient, given the range of national criminal justice statistical programs for which it is responsible. BJS' programs include collecting data on: correctional populations and facilities; courts and sentencing; recidivism; reentry; prosecution; civil justice; sex offender registries; and criminal history records. Under the National Instant Criminal Background Check System Improvement Act of 2007, BJS has an expanded role in improving background checks for firearms purchasers. BJS also has been collecting data from the states under the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act, which received no appropriation. Although the Act expired, it is anticipated to be reenacted shortly, and we urge that funds be appropriated for this purpose.

For BJS, the FY 2009 increase will support research and development of a NCVS redesign. However, efforts necessary to produce additional sub-national estimates useful to state and local governments, as recommended by the NAS panel, will require an even greater level of funding.

In addition, consistent with its mandate to support state statistical efforts, BJS provides support to Statistical Analysis Centers in 53 states and territories through the State Justice Statistics (SJS) program. SJS has remained flat-funded for over a decade; in FY 2008, only \$2.3 million was available to fund the program.

COSSA would ultimately like to see NIJ and BJS established within an Office of Justice Research and Statistics that would elevate science and data efforts in DOJ. We realize that is an authorization issue, but elevating the funding of these two agencies would help in that effort.

As always, COSSA understands that this is expected to be another difficult year for the appropriations' process. COSSA hopes that when you consider the FY 2010 funding for the agencies I have discussed, you will treat them as generously as you can. Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.