COSSA Washington Update

IN THIS ISSUE:

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CONGRESS RETURNS FOR BRIEF SESSION BEFORE ELECTION

With the summer and convention recess over, the House and Senate reconvened on September 8 to, what the leadership hopes, work through the month and finish as much business as possible before adjourning for the 2008 elections. The adjournment date has been set for September 26.

The most important agenda item is the enactment of a Continuing Resolution (CR) that will keep the government functioning into Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, which begins on October 1, 2008. The Democratic congressional leaders, unwilling to have another confrontation with President Bush over spending bills, have agreed to postpone completion of the FY 2009 appropriations process until next year.

The CR will provide funding for most federal agencies at the FY 2008 levels, with a few exceptions. The White House Office of Management (OMB) has asked Congress to include emergency war funding from the FY 2008 War Supplemental, as well as some other, what are called "anomalies." One of these would provide the Census Bureau with its full funding for FY 2009, including the extra funds requested in the spring (see Update, June 30, 2008).

There may be a confrontation on the CR concerning elimination of the current ban on oil and gas drilling on the continental shelf. Congressional Republicans spent the early part of the August recess speaking on the House floor in favor of lifting the ban.

In the meantime, the House Appropriations Committee will try and mark up the FY 2009 Defense spending bill. The hope is to complete congressional action on the bill and use it as the vehicle for the CR. The Military Construction—Veterans' Affairs bill, which is the only FY 20009 appropriation bill to pass either House so far, may also serve that purpose.

The Congressional leadership has also discussed moving another economic stimulus package for FY 2008. The White House has declared that such a bill is unnecessary. Before the recess, Senate Appropriations Chairman Robert Byrd (D-WV) floated a proposal for a $24 billion package that would include an extra $500 million for the National Institutes of Health.

August deficit projections from the Congressional Budget Office and OMB continue to predict between a $400 and $500 billion deficit for FY 2008. In addition, the Highway Trust Fund is about to run out of money.

Whether Congress has time to complete action on the CR, a stimulus package or anything else remains to be seen. If not, the prospect for a short-term CR though the election and a lame-duck session after the election looms large.

NSF REPORT: CONTINUED DECLINE IN R&D FUNDING IN FY 2007

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Science Resources Statistics Division (SRS) has issued a report that concludes "federal funding of academic science and engineering R&D [research and development] failed to outpace inflation for the second year in a row." Using data from the NSF Survey of R&D Expenditures at Universities and Colleges, the report notes that, in current dollars, these expenditures rose by 1.1 percent in FY 2007 to $30.4 billion. This represents a 1.6 percent decline, in real dollars, from FY 2006, which follows a 0.2 percent decline from FY 2005 to 2006. This is the first two-year decline in the 35 years history of the data series.

On the other hand, the Federal government remains the largest source of academic R&D funding, although its share has dropped in recent years to 62 percent in FY 2007. Overall, universities and colleges reported a 3.5 percent increase in science and engineering R&D expenditures, rising to $49.4 billion. Funding from non-federal sources rose by five percent in inflation-adjusted terms in FY 2007 as industry and state and local governments took up some of the slack. State and local governments contributed $3.1 billion and industry $2.7 billion in FY 2007. The largest non-governmental contributor remains institutional funds at $9.7 billion in FY 2007.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and other Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Agencies, according to the report, contributed 56 percent of total federally-funded expenditures to universities and colleges. NSF was second with around 12 percent.

In examining funding by fields, the Federal government provided universities and colleges $755 million for Social Sciences research and $600 million for Psychology research at universities and colleges in FY 2007. For Psychology, HHS contributed almost 73 percent of these funds. In the Social Sciences, HHS was responsible for 39 percent, NSF for 14 percent, and "Other" agencies, primarily Education provided 31 percent.

For more information about the report contact: Ronda Britt, NSF Science Resource Statistics Division, 703/292-7765 or rbritt@nsf.gov. The Division's Web Page www.nsf.gov/statistics has information and data about this report and many other data collection and analysis activities regarding the science and engineering enterprise.

HAROLD CLARKE NEW NSF DIVISION DIRECTOR

Harold D. Clarke, Ashbel Smith Professor in the School of Economics, Politics, and Policy Sciences at the University of Texas, Dallas, will be the new director of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social and Economic Sciences Division. The division is part of NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE). Clarke will replace Ed Hackett, who has returned to Arizona State University. The new division director will come to NSF on December 1. In the meantime, Frank Scioli, longtime political science program officer and recently deputy to Hackett, will act as interim director.

A co-investigator of the British Election Study in 2001 and 2005 and the Canadian National Election Studies, Clarke's research has been funded by NSF, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Economics and Social Research Council of the United Kingdom. His books include: *Performance Politics and the British Voter*, *Making Political Choices: Voting in Canada and the United States*, and *Political Choice in Britain.*

He has served as editor-in-chief of *Electoral Studies*, and joint editor of the *Political Research Quarterly*. He regularly teaches times series analysis in the University of Essex' Summer School in Data Analysis and Collection sponsored by the

European Consortium for Political Research. Clarke previously taught at the University of North Texas, Virginia Tech, and the University of Windsor in Canada.

For NSF he has been a member of the Political Science, Democratization, and IGERT Advisory panels. He has B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Western Ontario. His Ph.D. is in political science from Duke University.

ACADEMY REPORT RECOMMENDS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION MAKING

The idea of public participation in scientific policy making has been an argument made by many, including the Loka Institute (www.loka.org). Others have held up the consensus conference system in Denmark as the model for adding the voices of everyday citizens to policy discourses that are typically monopolized by scientific experts. In this country, adding "public" representatives to NIH Advisory Councils is another attempt to give "ordinary" citizens a role. Opponents of such participation argue that involving the public in decisions that require scientific expertise is ineffective and inefficient.

The National Academies' National Research Council (NRC) established a panel on Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making at the request of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy, the Food and Drug Administration, and the U.S. Forest Service. The panel investigated how public participation could help improve the quality, legitimacy, and capacity of environmental policy making.

The group, chaired by Thomas Dietz of Michigan State University, has issued its report, *Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making* (available at http://www.nap.edu/catlog/12434.html). Paul Stern, study director of the NRC's Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change, co-edited the report with Dietz.
The report concluded that "when done well, public participation improves the quality and legitimacy of a decision and builds the capacity of all involved to engage in the policy process." Public participation can also lead to better results in terms of environment quality and other social objectives as well as enhancing trust and understanding among parties. The panel, therefore recommended that "public participation should be fully incorporated into environmental assessment and decision-making processes," and should not be "merely a formal procedural requirement."

However, the report notes, that "achieving these results depends on using practices that address difficulties that specific aspects of the context can present." To overcome the challenges, the panel maintained that the process model should take into account four guiding principles: inclusiveness, collaborative problem formulation and process design, transparency, and good-faith communication. Agencies must also commit themselves to using the process to inform their actions and include a self-assessment component to learn from their experiences.

With regard to the specific area of environmental assessment and decision-making, where there is substantial scientific content, the report recommends five key principles for effectively melding scientific analysis and public participation:

- ensuring transparency of decision-relevant information and analysis;
- paying explicit attention to both facts and values;
- promoting explicitness about assumptions and uncertainties;
- including independent review of official analyses and/or engaging in a process of collaborative inquiry with interested and affected parties; and
- allowing for iteration to reconsider past conclusions on the basis of new information.

Finally, the report recommends that the agencies involving the public in scientific decision making invest in social science research to inform their practice and build broader knowledge about public participation. It suggests that the National Science Foundation (NSF) team with mission agencies in funding such research. A model would be the successful Partnership for Environmental Research between NSF and EPA that has helped fund the environmental decision making under uncertainty projects.

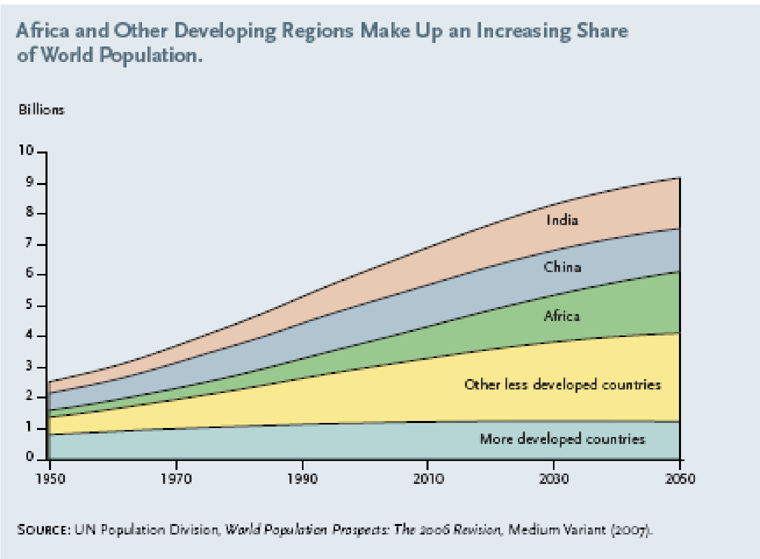
PRB 2008 DATA SHEET RELEASED: THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDE WIDENS

On Aug. 19, 2008 the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) released its *2008 World Population Data Sheet* at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. This year's data sheet, "Global Demographic Divide Widens," revealed that the inequality in the population and health profiles of rich and poor countries is widening.

The Data Sheet provides detailed information about country, regional and global population patterns with opposing patterns of population growth showing small growth in most wealthy countries and continued rapid population growth in the world's developing countries.

Carl Haub, PRB senior demographer and co-author of this year's data sheet focused primarily on world population trends. Haub reported that by 2050, global population is projected to rise to 9.3 billion, resulting in diverging growth patterns that will boost the population share living in today's less developed countries from 82 percent to 86 percent.

For the first time, this year's Data Sheet includes new data for the least developed countries and data for the Americas, giving weighted averages of the variables for North America and for Latin America and the Caribbean. Africa is the region with both the highest birth rates and the largest percentage of population growth projected for 2050. The continent's current population of 967 million is growing at about 2.4 percent per year and can be expected to reach one billion sometime in 2009. Africa's population is projected to double in size between 2008 and 2050.



Other 2008 Data Sheet highlights include:

World population will have an urban majority. In 2008, for the first time, half of the world's population will live in urban areas.

Despite some improvement, maternal mortality continues to be very high in developing countries. In those countries, one in 75 women still die from pregnancy-related causes. In both sub-Saharan Africa and in the 50 countries defined by the United Nations as least developed, that risk is one in 22. In stark contrast, about one in 6,000 women in the developed countries die from pregnancy-related causes.

Worldwide, women now average 2.6 children during their lifetimes, 3.2 in developing countries excluding China, and 4.7 in the least developed countries. Lifetime fertility is highest in sub-Saharan Africa at 5.4 children per woman. In the developed countries, women average 1.6 children. The United States, with an average of 2.1 children, is an exception to this low-fertility pattern in the world's wealthier countries.

In less developed countries, 18 percent of the population is undernourished. In the least developed countries, 35 percent of the population consumes fewer than the minimum calories required to lead a healthy active life. That figure rises above 60 percent in several sub-Saharan countries.

To view the report and PRB webcast visit www.prb.org.

READY OR NOT HERE THEY COME: IMPROVING HIGHER EDUCATION RETENTION AND GRADUATION

The Center for American Progress (CAP) believes America's postsecondary education system has a serious readiness problem, as reported in its recent report *College-Ready Students, Student-Ready Colleges*. The report finds that not only are students not ready for college both financially and academically, colleges are not ready to help students achieve success in college and beyond.

Currently, there are 15 million students enrolled in some form of postsecondary education. Nearly 88 percent of these students are in public institutions, and 42 percent of these are in community colleges. However, while the proportion of individuals enrolled in college has grown since the 1970s, the proportion of students receiving diplomas has declined. Less than 60 percent of students entering four-year institutions earn a bachelor's degree, and only one-fourth of community college students complete either an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree within six years.

Whether because of a lack of academic preparedness or inadequate financial resources, students are not ready for college. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development reports that the U.S. currently ranks 10th in the world in college attainment among 25 to 34 year olds, and has the highest college dropout rate among developed economies. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. economy will produce 15.6 million net new jobs between 2006 and 2016. Nearly half of those jobs will require postsecondary degrees.

In 2004, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated that there were 3.8 million youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who were not enrolled in school and were without a high school diploma. NCES statistics show that on average, just under a half million kids drop out between the 9th and 12th grades each year. Also, wide disparities in readiness continue to exist along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. Seventy-two percent of 1992 12th graders from the top socioeconomic status quintile earned a bachelor's degree or higher by 2000, while only 16 percent of students from the bottom SES quintile achieved this. And while 42 percent of whites aged 25 to 64 have an associate's degree or higher, only 26 percent of blacks and 18 percent of Hispanics do.

The CAP suggests the attainment gap will have a major impact on America's workforce and future competitiveness. By 2020, the proportion of whites in the workforce between the ages of 25 and 64 is expected to drop to 63 percent, down from its 1980 level of 82 percent. During the same period, the percentage of Hispanic residents aged 25 to 64 will almost triple from 6 percent to 17 percent, and the proportion of blacks in the U.S. population will grow by almost a third.

In the report, Louis Soares and Christopher Mazzeo laid out policy recommendations for the postsecondary education system including: investing in college preparation in high school; providing more flexible financial aid assistance; creating a greater alignment between high school and postsecondary institutions; and enhancing both high school and college accountability by measuring student achievement.

To regain America's global leadership in postsecondary education, especially among young adults age 25 to 34, the CAP recommends enhancing federal policy with a stronger focus on postsecondary completion and student and college readiness. This would require a major rethinking of postsecondary, secondary, and adult education as well as workforce development. CAP calls for federal leaders to set a goal of increasing the number of young adults with a postsecondary degree 50 percent in the next 20 years. The key to success, according to CAP, will be broadening the pathways students can use to earn a degree and managing all these parts, high school, colleges, the community, and businesses as an integrated network, rather than isolated systems.

MORE CALLS FOR AN IMPROVED POVERTY MEASURE

On August 26th, the U.S. Census Bureau released its 2007 Poverty and Income numbers. The most significant statistic is that children's poverty has increased significantly. In conjunction with the release of the numbers, the Brookings Institution held a policy briefing on *Poverty and Income in 2007*, which once again featured calls by the panelists for a more effective way to measure poverty in this country. Much of the discussion mirrored the congressional hearing held in July (see Update, July 28, 2008).

Douglas Nelson, President and CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and a witness at that hearing, asserted that the current measure is flawed in two fundamental ways. First, he argued that the measure underestimates the actual cost that typical families pay for their basic needs. The 1963 dollar figure only has been adjusted for inflation, even though food now accounts for one-seventh of an average family's budget. The formula, Nelson also noted, fails to take into account other core expenses, such as housing and childcare. The second basic flaw Nelson discussed is that the measure significantly underestimates the total income, including resources and benefits, which many families actually receive. Consequently, the official federal poverty data not only understates the cash and benefits many low income families enjoy, but also gives no indication of how well some key public economic investments are paying off.

Nelson maintained that a more accurate measure might lead to changes in the strategies the government uses to help families in need. An accurate poverty measure would also provide better information for considering long-term as well as short-term policy strategies, he contended. In addition, by including government benefits in the equation, we would get a better idea of who takes advantage of what programs and how they were doing as a result, Nelson concluded.

Mike Laracy, Coordinator for Public Policy for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, declared that the current poverty data is "completely divorced from economic realities families face." Housing, energy, and childcare costs have vastly increased in the four decades since the measure was created. Laracy insisted that to really help eradicate poverty there needs to be an increased focus on getting a more accurate poverty measurement and on eliminating persistent poverty.

For more information on the U.S. Census Report on Poverty and Income go to:
http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html

APPLICATIONS WANTED: HIV PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), is seeking investigator initiated research applications that propose to develop, implement, and evaluate new or improved HIV prevention programs that incorporate proven factors from social and sexual development, positive youth development, sexual risk behavior, and drug prevention programs for use in high-risk, urban American minority preadolescents or early adolescents (approximate ages 9-14).

The funding opportunity announcement (RFA-HD-08-010) is designed to support research projects that will develop, implement, and evaluate new or improved HIV prevention programs targeting minority preadolescents or early adolescents living in high-risk, urban communities in the U.S. The ultimate goals are: 1) to reduce exposure to HIV by preventing, delaying, or protecting against risky sexual behaviors and substance use behaviors that facilitate risk behaviors, 2) enhance resiliency by providing education, pro-social opportunities, and skills, and 3) improve knowledge, behavior, and health outcomes. Some, but not all, measurable outcomes may include: increased knowledge, improved negotiation and avoidance skills, increased pro-social behaviors, decreased intentions to engage in risky behaviors, and decreased sexual and substance abuse risk behaviors.

Projects considered responsive to this RFA include, but are not limited to, those that propose:

- To develop, implement, and evaluate (in a scientifically rigorous manner) theory-based, effective HIV prevention programs that incorporate essential elements from social development, sexuality development, positive youth development, sexual risk behavior prevention, and drug abuse prevention programs designed for inner city, minority early adolescents and preadolescents in schools or in after school programs.

- To consider the neural underpinnings of sexual behavior and the roles of self-regulation, impulsivity, sensation seeking, and reward circuitry.

- To implement prevention programs with input (including needs assessment and buy-in) and feedback from the targeted population of youths, parents, involved community members and representatives from schools or organizations where programs are implemented.

- To develop prevention programs that provides basic, accurate information about the risks of teen sexual activity and ways to prevent the potential negative consequences. The programs should deliver clear, consistent messages that are appropriate for the developmental stage, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation of preadolescents and early adolescents. The program should enhance communication, negotiation, and refusal skills.

- To develop prevention programs that consider the broad contexts in which the targeted youth live and function, including parents (beliefs, communication style, connectedness to youth, prior experiences with teen pregnancy or STD, time and financial constraints, substance use, etc.), siblings, peers (and the social pressures they exert), and other members of the household.

- To consider the influence of electronic media (music, videos, TV, print media, etc.) on sexual attitudes and behaviors of youth, and incorporate pertinent messages in the curricula. Furthermore, issues of health and media literacy, how information is presented to youth, and how youth, parents, and involved adults perceive sexuality education information are of interest.

- To consider sustainability of the intervention in the community. Hence training local staff members to educate, motivate, and challenge youth to be knowledgeable and to exhibit positive and protective social skills and behaviors is an essential component. Likewise, connecting youth with caring adults and peers who promote pro-social values, educational attainment, and community service is also encouraged.

- To incorporate teaching methods (that actively involve youth), behavioral goals, and materials that are appropriate for the age, sexual experience, and culture of the youth.

- To utilize existing HIV research networks and their community prevention infrastructures (e.g. ATN's Connect-to-Protect program) or community schools, clubs, religious organizations, health departments, school-based clinics, etc.

Applications are due December 11, 2008. For more information see http://grants/nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-08-010.html.

SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING IN BIOSTATISTICS II

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) are seeking applications for grants to develop, conduct, and evaluate summer courses in the basic principles and methods of biostatistics as employed in biomedical research. Noting that biostatistics is a fundamental scientific component of biomedical and public health research, it is emphasized in the funding opportunity announcement (RFA-HL-09-009) that the current demand for biostatisticians far exceeds the supply, and the gap continue to widen.

The courses would introduce participants to the field of biostatistics for the purpose of attracting new students into the field. The course would be designed to attract students from across the United States and cover the fundamental concepts of probability, statistical reasoning and inferential methods. It would be taught during the summers of 2010 – 2012 with appropriate modifications or refinements following each of the first two summers' sessions. Programs may choose an area of emphasis, such as clinical trials, statistical genetics, bioinformatics or epidemiology or take a general approach.

NHLBI and NCRR plan to fund up to seven grants in response to the announcement and will use the NIH Continuing Education Training Grant (T15) award mechanism. Applications are due by January 6, 2009. For more information see http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HL-009.html

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