



CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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COSSA ANALYSIS OF THE FY 2016 HOUSE COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE and RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT

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On May 14, the House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee marked up the fiscal year (FY) 2016 CJS appropriations bill, which provides annual funding for the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Justice, and Census Bureau and other federal statistical agencies. The bill will be considered by the full House Appropriations Committee on May 20. COSSA provided a [preliminary analysis](#) on May 13. Full details on the House bill are outlined below.

The CJS bill totals \$51.4 billion, which is a 2.5 percent increase over the FY 2015 CJS bill. Subcommittee chairman John Culberson (R-TX) noted during the May 14 markup that this amount “is sufficient to fund *essential* programs.” The bill keeps within the spending caps currently tamping down discretionary spending, making the FY 2016 appropriations bills even more challenging than usual. President Obama has threatened to veto any appropriations bill that adheres to these caps, making the House CJS bill a non-starter with the White House.

While the National Science Foundation (NSF) would see a small increase in the House proposal, the real winner in the bill is NASA, which happens to be a favorite of the chairman. The heavy focus and emphasis on NASA is one of the visible changes we are seeing with the new chairman who replaced Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), a long-time, staunch supporter of NSF, this year. NSF is largely downplayed in the House CJS bill when compared to recent years. As you will read in the analysis below, the FY 2016 CJS bill differs from previous bills in several other ways as well.

In general, agencies and programs that support social and behavioral science research would fare quite poorly in the bill. Among the many challenging provisions, the bill seeks to limit support for social science research at NSF, would enable potentially deep cuts to the National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics, and would degrade the American Community Survey within the Census Bureau.

Read on for full details on the House proposal.

Assuming the full Appropriations Committee passes the bill this week, the next stop will be the House floor. The Senate has not yet released its version of the bill, though the upper chamber intends to begin its appropriations activities in the coming week.

National Science Foundation

The House bill would provide the National Science Foundation (NSF) with a total budget of \$7.39 billion, which is \$50 million or 0.7 percent over the FY 2015 enacted level and 4.3 percent below the President’s request. The \$50 million increase would be applied to the Research and Related Activities account, which funds NSF’s research directorates. And while the bill does not propose appropriating NSF’s budget according to specific science directorates (as is proposed in the [America COMPETES Reauthorization](#)

[Act](#) to be considered by the full House on May 20), the committee report includes the following problematic language impacting social science funding:

The Committee directs NSF to ensure that Mathematical and Physical Sciences; Computer and Information Sciences and Engineering; Engineering; and Biological Sciences comprise no less than 70 percent of the funding within Research and Related Activities.

So while funding levels are not specified for each directorate, this language means that funding for the above directorates would be prioritized above the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) and the Geosciences Directorate (GEO), thereby politicizing the use of NSF grant funding. Further, when one accounts for all of the various funding directives provided in the report, the remaining 30 percent of funding could actually translate into substantial cuts to SBE and GEO in FY 2016. The exact impact cannot be determined at this point.

The House bill also addresses transparency and accountability at NSF by referencing section 106 of the America COMPETES Act (H.R. 1806), which would require that NSF explain how all of the grants it funds are in the “national interest.” The Committee report directs NSF to “comply with section 106 and provide periodic updates to the Committee on its transparency activities.” Given that H.R. 1806 is not law, it is unclear if or how NSF would comply with this direction.

The House report also directs NSF to develop guidelines and a plan that would “ensure that research conducted by NSF grantees is replicable.”

Finally, the House proposes flat funding for the Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR). Within the recommended amount, the Committee would prioritize the Advanced Technological Education program and broadening participation in science programs.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2015	Proposed FY 2016	FY 2016 House	House vs. FY 2015	House vs. Request
National Science Foundation	7344.2	7723.6	7394.2	0.7%	-4.3%
Research and Related Activities	5933.6	6186.3	5983.6	0.8%	-3.3%
Education and Human Resources	866.0	962.6	866	0.0%	-10.0%
Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction	200.8	200.3	200	-0.4%	-0.2%
Agency Operations and Award Management	325.0	354.8	325	0.0%	-8.4%
National Science Board	4.4	4.4	4.4	0.7%	0.7%
Office of the Inspector General	14.4	15.2	15.16	5.1%	0.0%

Department of Justice

Another major departure in the FY 2016 House CJS bill is the handling of funding for the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Normally funded through their own appropriations within the Office of Justice Programs account, the House report states:

In lieu of providing a base appropriation for the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the recommendation provides flexibility for the Department to fund these functions through a set-aside of grant programs. The Department shall provide a proposed allocation of funds for these activities in the spending plan required by this Act.

While on the surface this language suggests that flexibility to decide on a funding level for NIJ and BJS is a positive development, another, more likely interpretation is that without a direct appropriation, NIJ and BJS will be in competition with other funding lines within the Department of Justice for scarce resources, especially if the spending caps are maintained. If enacted, this language could realistically result in little to no base funding for NIJ or BJS in FY 2016.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2015	Proposed FY 2016	FY 2016 House
Bureau of Justice Statistics	41.0	61.4	n/a
National Institute of Justice	36.0	52.5	n/a

Census Bureau and Bureau of Economic Analysis

The House bill would provide flat funding at \$100 million for Economic and Statistical Analysis, which includes the Bureau of Economic Analysis, nearly \$14 million below the President’s request. The House accepts the Census Bureau’s reorganization proposal, which would change the previous Salaries and Expenses account to the Current Surveys and Programs account and move funding for certain surveys from the Periodic Censuses and Programs account into Current Surveys and Programs.

Current Surveys and Programs would receive \$265 million in the bill, which is \$3.6 million less than FY 2015 and \$12.9 million below the President’s request.

Periodic Censuses and Programs would receive \$848 million, which is \$28.6 million above FY 2015 but still \$374 million below the request. Within the amounts provided, \$600 million would be used for decennial census programs.

The Committee report includes extensive language on the American Community Survey, including:

The Committee is very concerned about the burdensome nature of the ACS and directs Census to focus on its core, constitutionally mandated decennial Census activities.

This language is extremely problematic for proponents of maintaining a mandatory ACS.

Further, in response to the [ACS content review](#) conducted over the last several months aimed at improving and streamlining the survey, the report states:

The Committee is extremely disappointed that this initial review only resulted in a proposal to remove one question. The Committee directs the Census Bureau to submit, no later than 45 days after enactment of this Act, a plan for the expeditious removal of additional questions, as appropriate, from the survey.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2015	Proposed FY 2016	FY 2016 House	House vs. FY 2015	House vs. Request
Bureau of the Census	1088.0	1500.0	1113.0	2.3%	-25.8%
Current Surveys and Programs	268.6	277.9	265.0	-1.4%	-4.6%
Periodic Censuses and Programs	819.4	1222.1	848.0	3.5%	-30.6%
Bureau of Economic Analysis	100.0	110.0	100.0	0.0%	-9.1%

The [Committee report](#) can be read in full on the Committee’s website. COSSA will continue to report on FY 2016 funding developments in the coming weeks.