



CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2017 Funding for the  
National Science Foundation, Census Bureau, National Institute of Justice, and  
Bureau of Justice Statistics

Prepared for the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Submitted by Wendy A. Naus, Executive Director  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
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On behalf of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), I offer this written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies for inclusion in the official committee record. For fiscal year (FY) 2017, COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate \$8 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), \$1.634 billion for the Census Bureau, \$48 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and \$58 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

COSSA serves as a united voice for a broad, diverse network of organizations, institutions, communities, and stakeholders who care about a successful and vibrant social science research enterprise. We represent the collective interests of all fields of social and behavioral science research, including but not limited to sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology, economics, statistics, language and linguistics, population studies, law, communications, educational research, criminology and criminal justice research, geography, history, and child development. *Social science research* studies social contexts across various time and spatial scales, including economic, cultural, demographic, and political contexts. *Behavioral research* seeks to better understand learning, cognition, emotion, temperament, motivation, and biobehavioral interactions.

Social and behavioral science research is supported across the federal government, including at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Justice. Further, federal statistics collected by the Census Bureau and other federal statistical agencies provide important data needed to conduct social science research that informs policy decisions. Taken together, federal social and behavioral science and statistical data help to provide us with answers to complex, human-centered questions such as:

- How to convince a community in a path of a tornado to heed warnings; or

- What are the best strategies for slowing the HIV/AIDS epidemic, or more recently, the Ebola crisis; or
- How to thwart cybercrime and protect Americans' privacy and security in an increasingly connected world.

In addition, new findings continue to increase the efficiency of our industries, improve the quality of K-12 education, help us understand crime patterns and evaluate prevention strategies, help manage our natural resources, keep our troops safe, help us to be informed as consumers, and allow paralyzed individuals to communicate. Among the countless innovations enabled by federal support for basic social science research are GPS, telecommunications spectrum auctions, life-saving kidney exchanges, and warning systems to protect lives and property from extreme weather events.

In short, knowledge derived from social and behavioral science research has made our population healthier, our democracy fairer, our nation safer, and our economy stronger. Without these sciences, policy-making on major national issues would not be based on evidence, and billions of dollars would be wasted.

### **National Science Foundation (\$8 billion)**

First, I wish to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding support for federal science agencies. Despite the tough, ongoing fiscal challenges, the Subcommittee has maintained funding for basic research as a priority.

**COSSA joins the broader scientific community and the 143 House Members who signed on to the March 22, 2016 bipartisan letter to the Subcommittee in support of \$8 billion for NSF in FY 2017, an increase of 6.7 percent.** This amount would put NSF back on a growth trajectory and would allow the agency to recover some of the purchasing power lost in recent years due to sequestration and caps on discretionary spending.

NSF funds basic scientific discovery, workforce training, and state-of-the-art facilities that keeps the U.S. ahead of our global scientific competitors. NSF supports about a quarter of all federally-funded basic scientific research conducted at colleges and universities nationwide. Most notably, NSF serves as the largest single funder of university-based basic social and behavioral science research. While the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) represents only about 3.6 percent of the entire NSF research budget, it supports more than two-thirds (67%) of total federal funding for academic basic research in the social and behavioral sciences.

Social and behavioral science discoveries funded by NSF have improved people's lives by:

- Improving public health.
- Improving the safety of our troops in combat areas through cultural research and understanding.

- Helping us understand how to prepare for and respond to natural and human-made disasters.
- Enhancing teaching and learning in education.
- Reducing violence among our youth.
- Improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.
- Generating billions of dollars for the U.S. Treasury with the creation of the telecommunications spectrum auctions.

As you know, the Administration requested an increase of only 1.3 percent in discretionary funding for NSF, while proposing that Congress approve one-time mandatory funding in the amount of \$400 million to bring the total NSF budget of \$8 billion for FY 2017. We recognize that the addition of new mandatory funding is not likely this year; however, I hope the proposed funding maneuver will not distract the Committee from the real needs of the agency. As Dr. France Córdova, NSF Director, testified before the House earlier this month, nearly \$4 billion worth of projects that are reviewed as “very good” to “excellent” are left on the cutting room floor each year due to inadequate funding. She added that this essentially invites researchers, especially new and young investigators, to leave the field and pursue other STEM careers. Simply put, there are far more exciting, potentially transformative research ideas out there than there is support. Further, as you may recall, the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010* sought a budget level of \$8.3 billion by FY 2013. While times have changed and sequestration remains a reality, we need not abandon the scientific aspirations Congress set for NSF in the original *America COMPETES Act of 2007* and its reauthorization in 2011.

Finally, as stated in the bipartisan letter, a shortage of five million STEM professionals can be expected by 2020 if NSF, which plays a central role in turning out the next generation of scientists, is not fully funded.

**Second, COSSA joins the 34 House Members who signed the March 23, 2016 bipartisan letter urging the Committee to maintain current practice when appropriating funds for NSF.** The scientific community strongly contends that experts at NSF, the merit-review process, and the vast network of scholars around the country who provide technical and content expertise to the NSF leadership are best suited to advise the agency on the most promising science worthy of support. Making a change to current practice—such as by appropriating specific, arbitrary amounts for each NSF directorate—would place scientific disciplines in direct competition with one another for what are already scarce resources, thereby discouraging interdisciplinary science. In addition, it would dismantle the scientific infrastructure that has been assembled over the last several decades by side-stepping the multifaceted, merit-based process that has served the agency so well since its founding. For this reason, **we hope the House CJS Appropriations Bill will maintain the current practice of appropriating funds to the Research & Related Activities account, leaving NSF with the flexibility to fund the most promising science across all fields.** Further, in the spirit of the bipartisan letter, which argues that “NSF’s appropriations [should] not include arbitrary funding levels for its research directorates,” **we urge the Committee to resist pressure to include report language that would single out individual directorates for disproportionate treatment, as we saw in the FY 2016 House CJS bill.** Such

language would be in direct conflict with the intentions of the bipartisan letter and remarks made by the Subcommittee Chairman at the NSF hearing earlier this year stating that he has no desire to appropriate by directorate.

### **Census Bureau (\$1.5 billion), U.S. Department of Commerce**

**COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate \$1.634 billion to the U.S. Census Bureau in FY 2017.** Accurate, objective, representative, timely, reliable and accessible data and statistics are necessary ingredients to the conduct of evidence-based analyses of federal programs.

Fiscal year 2017 is a critical one for the Census Bureau as we near the 2020 Decennial Census. The Census Bureau will be working to complete production of interoperable systems for the reengineered decennial. To do so, the Bureau requires funding to fully evaluate and develop new methods and operations. COSSA urges Congress to appropriate \$778 million for 2020 Census planning, a reasonable request at this critical juncture in the decennial planning cycle that will allow the agency to complete its sweeping design reforms and prepare for the 2018 End-To-End Readiness Test.

**One critically important function of the Census Bureau is the American Community Survey**, which is the nation's only source of comparable (across geography), consistent (across time), timely (updated annually), high quality demographic and socio-economic data for all communities in the U.S. The ACS replaced the Census "long form" in 2005 at the behest of Congress. The accuracy of the data collected by the ACS relies on the mandatory nature of the program. If successful, efforts to make the ACS voluntary could translate to a decline in response rates of at least 20 percent and an increase in survey costs by about \$100 million, according to agency estimates. More importantly, reliable socio-economic data would be lost for entire communities, especially those in rural areas. COSSA asks Congress to appropriate \$251.1 million for the American Community Survey (ACS). Funding at this level will allow the Census Bureau to maintain a valid sample size and continue research on new methods and streamlined operations to reduce respondent burden, improve question wording, and control costs. We further ask that the mandatory status of the ACS be maintained.

### **National Institute of Justice (\$48 million) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (\$58 million), U.S. Department of Justice**

**COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate \$48 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and \$58 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).** NIJ serves as the research arm of the Department of Justice, playing a critical role in helping the agency to understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control. It supports rigorous social science research that can be disseminated to criminal justice professionals to keep communities safe and prevent and reduce crime. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is one of 13 principal federal statistical agencies. BJS produces data that provides statistical evidence needed by researchers and criminal justice policy decision makers. Taken together with NIJ, these investments represent the only dedicated sources of federal

research support committed to enhancing our understanding of crime and the criminal justice system, including around topics like victimization, law enforcement, recidivism and reentry, drugs and crime, and tribal justice.

Social science research supported by the agencies informs policymaking on timely crime and justice issues like:

- Human trafficking;
- Evaluation of anti-gang programs;
- Policing;
- Children exposed to violence;
- Sentencing alternatives to incarceration;
- Elder abuse; and
- Reentry and probation.

Demand by policymakers and criminal justice professionals for rigorous, objective research on policing, mental health, sentencing reform, and other timely topics has increased to unprecedented levels in recent years. However, at the current funding levels, NIJ and BJS simply do not have the capacity to meet the demand. In addition to our request of \$48 million for NIJ for FY 2017, we further urge Congress to approve the Administration's request to increase the Research, Evaluation, and Statistics set-aside from 2 to 3 percent, providing additional flexibility to the agency to take on new, timely research questions as they arise.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the social and behavioral science research community. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.

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