

ELECTION 1996: STATUS QUO LEAVES MUCH TO CONSIDER

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The 1996 elections were described as "boring," "uneventful," and "status quo." Less than 49 percent of the age eligible electorate bothered to vote, despite large increases in registration secured through the Motor Voter Law. Scholars will resume the debate over whether this is a danger signal to democracy or a satisfaction with its processes. Those who must focus on the results and their implications for advocacy and policy always have something to chew on.

Results

President Clinton achieved reelection with 49 percent to Bob Dole's 41 percent, with Ross Perot declining to 8 percent of the vote. Those numbers resemble the 1980 election when Ronald Reagan won with 51 percent to President Carter's 41 percent and John Anderson's 9 percent. Clinton won by putting together the old Democratic coalition of union households, Blacks, Jews, with better than the usual Democratic showing among suburbanites, Hispanics, and in a reverse of the last decade, young people. Most explicitly, women played a major role in Clinton's popular vote victory. According to exit polls, he won the women's vote 54-37.

As usual, the electoral college exaggerated the margin of the popular vote, as Clinton won 379 votes to Dole's 159. Clinton carried eight of the ten largest states, again reversing a Republican tide in the 1980s. He won Arizona and Florida for the Democrats for the first time in many years. The influence of Medicare played a significant role there. Dole hung onto the Mountain West, the Great Plains and most of the South, but Clinton made the Northeast, the Industrial Midwest and the Pacific Coast, Democratic strongholds.

In the Senate, the Republicans gained two seats, giving them a 55-45 majority. Only one incumbent, Sen. Larry Pressler (R-SD) was defeated, losing to South Dakota's House member Tim Johnson. The four open seats in the South split evenly with Democrats Max Cleland and Mary Landrieu holding

on to Sam Nunn's Georgia seat and Bennett Johnston's Louisiana seat. In a setback to the President, Tim Hutchinson became the first Republican Senator ever elected from Arkansas. In Alabama, conservative Democrat Howell Heflin retired and was replaced by conservative Republican Jeff Sessions. In 1986, Sessions had been denied a federal judgeship when the Senate Judiciary Committee, with Heflin casting the deciding vote, refused to send his nomination to the floor.

In the other ten open seats caused by retirements, only one seat changed party. In Nebraska, Chuck Hagel made a remarkable comeback to defeat sitting governor Ben Nelson and take over the seat vacated by Democrat James Exon. The nine other seats stayed in the same party. Aside from Hutchinson and Johnson, six other House members move up to the Senate: Wayne Allard (R-CO), Sam Brownback (R-KS), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Jack Reed (D-RI), Pat Roberts (R-KS), and Robert Torricelli (D-NJ). Other new Senators are: Susan Collins (R-ME), a former staffer to Maine Sen. William Cohen, who is expected to join the state's other Senator, Olympia Snowe, in the body's diminished ranks of moderate GOP Senators. Wyoming sent conservative Republican State Senator Mike Enzi to replace the departed Alan Simpson. Oregon voters did not disappoint Gordon Smith in his second attempt at gaining a Senate seat. A loser to Democrat Sen. Ron Wyden earlier this year in the special election to replace Bob Packwood, Smith held onto the seat of Mark Hatfield. Unlike, the earlier race, Smith moved to the center in his successful contest.

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In the House, as of Sunday November 10, the results indicate 223 Republicans elected, 204 Democrats and 2 Independents. (One independent Bernard Sanders (VT) will caucus with the Democrats, the other Joanne Emerson (MO) will join the GOP.) Three races remain undecided because of the need to complete counting disputed ballots. Three races in Texas will go to a runoff. In the end, the Democrats will probably pick up between 8 and 11 seats, short of the 19 they needed to retake control of the House.

One of the three seats still hanging belongs to Rep. George Brown (D-CA), ranking Democrat on the House Science Committee. He holds a slim 1,150 vote lead. The other two races where vote counting remains incomplete are the districts held by Rep. Robert Dornan (R-CA), who clings to a 233-vote lead, and Rep. Jim Bunn (R-OR), who trails by some 7,500 votes. Some contests may bring recounts, including the suburban Philadelphia race where Republican freshman Jon Fox held on by a 10-vote margin.

The House races returned two social/behavioral scientists to Congress. David Price (D-NC), a political science professor, and Ted Strickland (D-OH), a psychology professor, both of whom revenged their defeats from two years ago against the people who beat them. New member Bruce Baird (D-WA), is the chairman of the psychology department at Pacific Lutheran University.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral scientists. *Update* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$65; institutional subscriptions, \$130, overseas mail, \$130. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA, 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

There will be at least 74 new House members, a decline from the 86 elected in 1994 and the 110 elected in 1992. Only 19 incumbent Republicans lost, including 14 freshmen. Three Democratic incumbents lost, Reps. Mike Ward (KY), Harold Volkmer (MO), and Bill Orton (UT). The Republicans held down their overall losses by winning seats left open by Democratic retirements in the South.

New Administration

As with any second term President, new Cabinet, sub-cabinet and White House staff members will abound. The President has announced that Erskine Bowles will replace Leon Panetta as Chief of Staff. Already the Secretaries of State, Defense, Labor, and Commerce have announced their departures. Others are expected to follow. Two who are expected to remain are Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala and Attorney General Janet Reno. Laura Tyson, head of the White House National Economic Council will return to California. Head of the Council of Economic Advisers Joseph Stiglitz is reportedly headed to the World Bank.

Uncertain is the future of Presidential Science Adviser John Gibbons. Gibbons has told *Science and Government Report* that he will likely stay, pointing to the new lease on his Washington apartment, but rumors persist that he would like to retire to his farm. National Science Foundation director Neal Lane has a fixed six year term, and is expected to complete the remaining three years. Harold Varmus, NIH Director, is likely to stay as well.

Hill Leadership Continuity

Senator Trent Lott (R-MS), who replaced Bob Dole as Majority Leader in 1996, with his enhanced numbers of Republicans, will likely become the major GOP congressional spokesperson. Sen. Don Nickles (R-OK) will assist as Majority Whip. On the Democratic side, Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD), will continue to lead the Democrats with Sen. Wendell Ford (D-KY) as the Minority Whip.

The House leadership is expected to remain in place. Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) will have a second consecutive term as Speaker of the House, the first Republican since Nicholas Longworth (1925-31) to do so. The two Texans, Reps. Dick Armey and Tom

DeLay will continue as Majority Leader and Majority Whip respectively. On the Democratic side, Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-MO) and Rep. David Bonior (D-MI) will continue as Minority Leader and Minority Whip. Given the closeness of the margin, the moderates in both parties are expected to play a much larger role. This gives Rep. Charles Stenholm (D-TX), Rep. Gary Condit (D-CA), and Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) enhanced power as leaders of groups of moderates in both parties.

Committee Changes: Senate

Four key committees will have new leaders in the 105th Senate. Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK) will take over the reins of the appropriations committee. Stevens will probably continue to head the Defense Subcommittee. Always a strong proponent of his home state, the new post should provide opportunities for Alaska. NIH supporters who counted former chairman Hatfield as a champion, are not as sure about Stevens. Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) will remain as ranking Democrat. There will be three new members of the committee. The chairs of the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies (including NSF) subcommittee, Sen. Kit Bond (R-MO), the Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA), and the Commerce, State, Justice Subcommittee Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) are expected to continue.

Moderate to liberal Republican Jim Jeffords (R-VT) supported Lott in the majority leader's contest last summer. This should be enough to ward off challengers to his ascension to the chair of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee where he will work with Ranking Democrat Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) to rewrite the Higher Education Act, up for reauthorization next year. They may even consider an NSF reauthorization.

The Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee's new chairman will be Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). A general supporter of university research, McCain has not much use for the President's technology initiatives that support what he considers corporate welfare. Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) remains the ranking Democrat. Fresh from winning reelection to a full term, Sen. Fred Thompson (R-TN), in only his third year in the Senate, will get to chair the Governmental Affairs Committee, where potential investigations into administration wrong doing may

occur. Sen. John Glenn (D-OH) will remain the ranking Democrat. Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) will become the ranking Democrat on the Budget Committee, where Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM) will continue to be a major force in any budget negotiations.

Committee Changes: House

In the House, Rep. Bob Livingston (R-LA) will likely continue as Chairman of the appropriations committee. Rep. Joseph McDade (R-PA), former chair, has been acquitted of wrongdoing and may wish to reclaim his right to the committee's leadership. It appears that the Speaker, who bypassed other senior Republicans on the committee to choose Livingston, will deny McDade the post. Reps. John Porter (R-IL), Jerry Lewis (R-CA), and Harold Rogers (R-KY) will continue to decide the fate of funding for agencies within the jurisdictions of the Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee, the VA, HUD, IA Subcommittee, and the Commerce, Justice, State Subcommittee. Rep. Ernest Istook (R-OK) will likely take over as head of the Treasury, Postal, General Government Subcommittee, where he can continue to pursue his attempts to defund nonprofit organizations. A report due on December 1 may call for the elimination of some of the 13 subcommittees, although the only likely casualty could be the D.C. Subcommittee which might be subsumed by the Treasury subcommittee. The full committee has ten openings: 4 on the Republican side and 6 on the Democratic side.

With the retirement of Rep. Robert Walker (R-PA), Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) will take the reins of the House Science Committee. Sensenbrenner, who has chaired the Space Subcommittee, has been described as "fair," and "responsible," who despite being fiscally tough will take a "moderate careful approach" to matters before the committee. In his Subcommittee role, he displayed a keen interest in international science, particularly the Russian contribution to the space station. He is apt to give the subcommittee chairs more freedom than Walker did. Rep. Steve Schiff (R-NM) will likely continue as head of the Basic Research Subcommittee.

The new Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee will be Rep. Bob Smith (R-OR). Enticed to seek his old seat by the Speaker when the Republican incumbent was embarrassed, Smith was

promised the committee leadership as an incentive. Stenholm will be the ranking Democrat. The Government Reform Committee could become even more partisan, as Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN) head of a group of GOP House members known as the Conservative Action Team takes the chairmanship. The new Democratic ranking member will be old style liberal Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA). If the House decides to keep the investigative heat on the administration, this committee could produce the fireworks. Burton will also get to keep tabs on the Census Bureau as well.

The House will organize itself the week of November 18. The Senate the week of December 2. The 105th Congress will convene in January. The words of reconciliation currently dominating the agenda will soon give way to the clash of interests between the administration and Congress, and the two political parties, that make democracy messy despite the best of intentions. Campaign finance reform, balancing the budget, entitlement reforms, the federal role in education will all form part of the new congressional agenda. The electorate has spoken. End partisan bickering and solve problems are the messages. How these are operationalized will be the key to the next phase of American politics.

NIH BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH DEFINITION AVAILABLE

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A definition of behavioral and social science research is now available on the home page of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 1993 Congress created the OBSSR, believing that "scientific research on behavioral and social factors had been underfunded relative to their contributions to health and illness and compared with funding for biomedical sciences." In addition to creating the OBSSR, Congress also mandated that a "standard definition of behavioral and social sciences research be established. The definition is to be used to "assess and monitor funding for behavioral and social sciences research at all NIH institutes, centers and divisions."

The nine-page definition is divided into two sections: Core Areas of Research and Adjunct Areas of Research, with the core area further divided into basic or fundamental research and clinical research. It is noted in the preamble to the definition that several key themes cut across the varied areas within social and behavioral research. These include:

- an emphasis on theory-driven research;
- the search for general principles of behavioral and social functioning;
- the importance of a developmental life span perspective;
- an emphasis on individual variation, and variation across sociodemographic categories such as ethnicity, gender, age, and socioeconomic status; and,
- a focus on both the social and biological context of behaviors.

The preamble further notes that portions of the definition "were derived from definitions previously developed by various groups including the NIH Behavioral and Social Science Research Coordinating Committee, the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the National Research Council and others."

OBSSR Director Norman Anderson underscored that the definition is currently "in the process of being tested to insure that it is effective in capturing all behavioral and social science grants, while excluding those outside this field. Following this process, the definition will be applied to assess the NIH portfolio, the results of which will form the basis of a report to Congress."

The OBSSR's home page address is:
www1.od.nih.gov/obssr/obssr.htm

PANEL DISCUSSES INTERSECTION OF DATA AND PUBLIC POLICY *MB*

At the recently held annual meeting of the Association of Public Data Users, a panel of experts discussed the linkages between public data and public policy.

Panel moderator TerriAnn Lowenthal, an independent consultant and former congressional staff member for statistical issues, opened the discussion by noting that "data is the genesis and foundation of most policy," but said that the extent to which policy makers understand data issues is unclear. This includes issues such as the timeliness, accessibility, accuracy, and independence of statistics, she stated.

David McMillen, a member of the Democratic staff of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee and veteran of many congressional debates over the Census, said that social statistics "bring to the table a set of problems . . . not solutions." He urged the research and data communities to become more politically active, both to make policy makers better aware of the information data provides and also to help protect the sanctity of the federal statistical system, which he said always has and always will be under attack. He said that data users should "function as citizens" and ignore the "artificial distinction" that they should stay out of the public arena.

McMillen said he is frustrated that "nobody is debunking bad data," saying that the statistical community needs to stand up and say "that's not good science" when appropriate. In his opinion, the advocacy community resists federal statistics because they lose control of the numbers, which "may not paint the picture they want to paint."

Immigration Data a Case Study

Data on immigration was used as a case study by Jeffrey S. Passel of the Urban Institute. According to Passel, there are still "serious inadequacies" in immigration statistics, despite significant progress in the decade since the National Academy of Sciences noted large shortcomings in the area. Passel said that there is no coordinated planning and producing immigration data collection efforts, commenting that

what is done is ad hoc at best. He said that the statistics has no central role at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), terming their data programs the "stepchild of administrative processes." He noted "serious mismatches" between data needs and availability, saying that "we still can't answer very simple questions" about the size, composition, and dynamics of immigration.

Passel blamed the "crosstalk" on immigration issues on poor quality data. He made four recommendations: centralized federal control and coordination of immigration data, strengthened INS data collection and analysis capabilities, improved data on citizenship and legal status, and a "framework consensus" on the issues related to this data, perhaps facilitated by the National Academy of Sciences.

Patricia Ruggles, an economist with the congressional Joint Economic Committee (JEC), concurred with both McMillen and Passel on the need for the data user community to work toward a consensus on higher quality data for policy making purposes. She said that Members of Congress have difficulty assessing the quality of data, fueled by the perception that one can find numbers to suit their own purposes. Ruggles said that the bipartisan JEC holds monthly hearings to hear the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) unveil the latest unemployment figures in part to ensure that this vital data is released in a timely, apolitical manner.

Ruggles cited the ongoing debate over revising the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as an example of the data-policy nexus. Working on the premise that BLS has overstated the rise of prices, many in Congress want to revise the measure. (See *Update*, July 3, 1995). Where politics enters this, Ruggles said, is that Social Security and other entitlement programs are linked to the CPI. Scaling down the CPI would free up sizable amounts of money for policy makers to put toward other areas, she noted. Commenting that is tempting to revise the CPI to achieve fiscal goals, Ruggles said that data users should be concerned over Congress, and not the statistical community, legislating a new methodology for the CPI. This would create a "slippery slope" that would jeopardize the independence of the federal statistical system.

OERI AWARDS FIELD INITIATED GRANTS *HS*

During the battle to reauthorize the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) at the U.S. Department of Education, COSSA and its allies argued for a strengthening of the funding reserved for field initiated research -- educational research projects where the topics and methods of study are generated by investigators. The reauthorization legislation created five National Research Institutes and set-aside funding for these types of studies. Last week the OERI announced the culmination of that struggle. What was once less than a \$1 million program has now blossomed; \$8.8 million was awarded for 47 grants.

Researchers applied to one of the five National Research Institutes and each funded work that was within its respective legislative mission. Grant recipients included universities, state departments of education, school districts, research institutions, a children's hospital, and one individual. One of the grants is jointly funded with the National Science Foundation.

The National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment awarded 13 grants totaling \$2.65 million. Projects addressed issues such as reducing and preventing violence in schools; using technology to improve teaching and learning; organizing schools for effective instruction; and improving teaching and learning in the core content areas.

The National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students awarded 15 grants totaling over \$2.77 million. These multi-year projects include studies to increase the achievement of Native American students; to improve student outcomes in schools where a majority of students live in poverty; coordination of family, school and community programs; and to improve educational opportunities with limited English proficiency.

The National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education awarded seven grants totaling over \$1.26 million. One of the recipients is Suzanne Randolph of the University of Maryland, who

earlier this year spoke at the COSSA congressional seminar on *Resiliency and Kids: Overcoming Diversity*. The topics to be studied include studying instructional procedures as they relate to the developmental needs of young children with disabilities; examining the role of families and schools in promoting positive developmental outcomes for young children growing up in violent neighborhoods; developing a culturally and developmentally appropriate prekindergarten math curriculum; an intergenerational literacy project which will develop literacy portfolios at home and at school; and addressing parenting and readiness of preschool children with a focus on home visiting strategies.

The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking and Management awarded six grants for almost \$900,000. Topics for research include: professional development in historically low achieving schools; local reaction to state education reform; charter schools and professional development schools; promoting ethnic and racial harmony in schools; and using math specialists in elementary schools.

The National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning awarded \$1.29 million to six projects. These will examine: benefits and costs associated with distance education; effective public library services in low income areas; better lifelong career development for disabled adults enrolled in two-year colleges; effective adult learning experiences in museums; effectiveness of providing basic skills instructions through community networks and through the Internet to adults; and effective faculty contributions to undergraduate learning.

AIDS RESEARCH DIRECTOR DISCUSSES FUNDING, FUTURE PRIORITIES *AS*

The recommendations of the *NIH AIDS Research Program Evaluation Task Force* (Levine Report) "have already had an influence" on budget allocations, said the Office of AIDS (OAR) Director William Paul at a recent discussion of the OAR's FY

1997 budget status with the agency's Advisory Council members.

Paul noted that the OAR provisions in the FY 1997 Omnibus Spending Bill (see *Update*, October 14) specified that total AIDS funding is determined by the Directors of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the OAR. He further noted that the accompanying report language to the FY 1997 Omnibus Spending Bill appropriates funds to the Institutes, Centers and Divisions (ICDS), but AIDS funds are to be allocated directly to OAR for distribution to ICDs consistent with the OAR's AIDS research plan. While this is not the consolidated appropriations OAR sought, Paul pointed out that the spending measure also "states that the NIH and OAR have indicated they expect to allocate \$1.5 billion for AIDS research. Allocations may be modified based on changing scientific opportunities and recommendations of advisory bodies." This allows for the achievement of "much of the important features that would have been embodied in the consolidated appropriations," according to Paul. Furthermore, he cited the legislation's new 3-percent transfer authority provision. This will allow the NIH and OAR directors to shift AIDS research funding between ICDs throughout the year, providing an opportunity to make emergency changes that can be substantial and have far reaching implications.

Prevention Science Working Group Established

The Levine Report was formally adopted by the OAR Advisory Council July 3, 1996. The Working Group component of the Report was accepted on March 13th by the Council. Since March, a series of meetings have been held with NIH Director Harold Varmus, Dr. Paul and selected ICD Directors "to address the implementation of many of the recommendations in the Working Group report."

Among the Levine panel's major recommendations was that NIH develop an HIV Prevention Science Agenda "that is coordinated, comprehensive, and includes and combines biomedical, behavioral, and social interventions." The panel also recommended that the OAR convene a group of experts to advise its Director on the development and implementation of this agenda.

Complying with the panel recommendations, the OAR has established a Prevention Science Working Group under the auspices of the OAR Advisory Council. Paul underscored that OAR's FY 1997 budget allocations includes \$6 million held in reserve for a prevention research initiative to be transferred to the ICDs according to areas identified by the OAR HIV Prevention Science Working Group.

The working group consists of representatives from the extramural science community and community organizations with expertise in biomedical and behavioral science-based approaches to HIV prevention. The group will solicit additional input from relevant NIH institutes and centers and other interested parties on an ad-hoc basis. The working group's initial task will be to provide the OAR Director with a short list of practical priorities in areas that could benefit from extra resources. Paul urged the group to take the activity "extremely seriously."

James W. Curren, Dean, Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, heads the working group. It held its first meeting on October 30. Judith Auerbach, a former COSSA staff member, now the Behavioral and Social Science Coordinating Chair in the Office of AIDS Research at NIH, will serve as the Executive Secretary for the group.

FY 1998 Plan for HIV-Related Research

Paul also discussed the structure of the FY 1998 Plan for HIV-Related Research which includes several areas of emphasis. The investment areas for behavioral and social science research include:

- ◆ "Development of more comprehensive theories and models of risk-taking and risk-avoidance that take into account developmental and life-course factors;
- ◆ Bio-behavioral and socio-behavioral determinants and mechanisms of sexuality;
- ◆ Research on partner selection and relationship dynamics; and
- ◆ Interdisciplinary methodological research on how best to design effective and appropriate community-level interventions."

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