

**SCIENCE COMMITTEE  
REPORT: LOOK TO SBE TO  
REDUCE DIRECTORATES** *HS*

The majority report from the House Science Committee to accompany H.R. 3322, the Omnibus Civilian Science Reauthorization Act of 1996, once again includes language that indicates the Social Behavioral and Economic Science Directorate is the target of the Republican majority when it required NSF to reduce the number of its scientific directorates to six. However, in a change from last year, the Committee has made explicit that "in evaluating and restructuring NSF, the Committee has given discretion to the Director, requiring only that he report his reorganization plan to the Congress by November 15, 1996."

The rest of the section commenting on the elimination of a directorate repeats much of last year's language recommending that NSF "look to the current Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate to determine if its current program level reflects sound priorities within overall science funding." The Committee concludes that SBE research reflects "trends toward support of more applied research and research in areas, that in tight budget times are of lower scientific priority." And since SBE research is in areas that "are cross-cutting, SBE is a candidate for integration into other research Directorates."

In their dissenting views, the Science Committee Democrats wrote: " We object to the unfavorable characterization in the Committee View of the value and content of the research sponsored by NSF's [SBE] Directorate in the light of any hearing or oversight record to support these statements. The most recent testimony received by the Committee on March 2, 1995 [by COSSA Witness Julian Wolpert], May 20, 1993 [by COSSA Witness William Julius Wilson] and March 14, 1989 [by Herbert Simon], documents the important contributions of research in the social, behavioral and economic sciences. None of these hearings provides a basis for questioning the priority

or basic nature of the research sponsored by NSF in these fields."

In footnotes, the Democrats include statements affirming SBE's importance from National Academy of Sciences President Bruce Alberts, and Rita Colwell, then President of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences. It also notes the contribution of game theory research to the FCC auction of the electro-magnetic spectrum.

**Lane Objects and White House Issues Veto Threat**

The bill has not passed the House yet, but is expected on the floor the week of May 20. NSF and the White House have already expressed their opposition. In a three page letter to Chairman Walker, NSF Director Neal Lane objects to many provisions in the bill, including the one reducing the number of science directorates -- "particularly since the Committee's accompanying report once again suggests that the SBE directorate should be the organization eliminated." Lane declares: "I remain opposed to any suggestion that the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences should be de-emphasized within the NSF portfolio. The simple elimination of a single directorate would be viewed as a blow to the research currently supported in that directorate."

In addition, because of many objectionable provisions regarding the agencies in the Omnibus bill,

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- CDC Firearms Research Defended
- AHCPR to Establish Centers for Evidence-Based Practice
- NIH Hearing Looks at Research Support

the Office of Management and Budget has issued a statement threatening a presidential veto of H.R. 3322 as currently written. On NSF specifically, OMB notes that it objects to the bill's interference with "the Foundation's ability to effectively manage its programs through reductions in its workforce and unwarranted organizational restructuring."

## SCIENCE BOARD HEARS ABOUT HUMAN CAPITAL INITIATIVE *HS*

At its May 10 meeting, the National Science Board heard a presentation from the SBE directorate on its Human Capital Initiative (HCI). Assistant Director Cora Marrett and others provided the Board with examples of the research conducted under the initiative. Following the presentation, Board member Charles Hess, Director of International Programs at the University of California, Davis, noted that research conducted through the HCI initiative was important and he hoped that Chairman Walker would get the message. Board member Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UCLA, also expressed her excitement at the basic research fostered by HCI.

Bill Butz, Social, Behavioral and Economic Research Division Director, began by paying tribute to Board member Robert Solow, whose pioneering work set economists on the trail of investigating the impact

of human capital on economic growth. Paul Chapin, the Linguistics program director, discussed research on language acquisition known as syntactic bootstrapping conducted by Letitia Nagles at Yale University. This research demonstrates that children learn nouns by association with real-world objects, whereas verbs are learned from grammatical contexts.

## Personal Decision-Making

Robin Cantor, program director for Decision, Risk and Management Sciences, provided the Board with examples of research that affects personal investment decisions regarding health and education choices. She focused on the "subjective discount rate" or tradeoffs involved in making these decisions. Two factors involved are the influence of "the paradox of impatience," described by George Lowenstein of Carnegie Mellon and Drazen Prelec of MIT, and the influence of the decision-domain investigated by Gretchen Chapman of the University of Illinois-Chicago. In the former, individuals exhibit degrees of impatience. Some, such as high-school basketball players skipping college to enter the NBA, choose current consumption over future rewards. Others will choose future rewards, such as a longer life and postpone current consumption. Chapman examines contextual factors as they influence the design of programs to affect behaviors, particularly with regard to health choices.

The impact of geographical information systems and geographic analysis for research on violent crime was explained by J.W. Harrington, Geography and Regional Science program officer. Focusing on a longitudinal study of homicides in St. Louis from 1960-1994, Harrington demonstrated how Carol Kohlfeld, Richard Rosenfeld, both of the University of Missouri, St. Louis, and John Sprague of Washington University, St. Louis, examined the distinctive roles of neighborhood context, social context and individual relationships on violent crime and neighborhood decline by mapping the 5,000 homicides in St. Louis during the time frame of their study.

Finally, Dan Newlon, Economics program officer, related the importance of SBE supported multi-user data bases such as the Panel Study on Incomes Dynamics and the Luxembourg Income Study. The PSID, a longitudinal sample that has tracked the same families for 28 years, provides detailed descriptions of

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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.

income, wealth, demographics, and other variables. Given its longevity, PSID now includes tracking of intergenerational samples as children from the original sample leave their families, grow up, and start families of their own. The LIS provides comparable household survey data from 25 countries. Newlon discussed three hypotheses seeking to explain growing U.S. income inequality. He noted that the impact on U.S. unskilled labor from imports from low wage countries and that changes in U.S. government policies that hurt low income U.S. workers were not as powerful an explanation for the growing income gap as the technological changes that make education more important than in the past. Citing the work of Richard Freeman and Lawrence Katz of Harvard, Newlon noted that analyses of earnings time series show the growing importance of education relative to other variables and the substitution of skilled for unskilled labor across major industrial groupings within the U.S.

### **PETERSEN SPEAKS TO SBE'S FUTURE AT ADVISORY COMMITTEE** HS

NSF Deputy Director Anne Petersen, told the SBE Advisory Committee meeting on May 3, that "we are not going to excise any part of science," as part of any reorganization plan NSF may propose in the future. The Committee, chaired by Jacqueline Eccles, a psychologist from the University of Michigan, expressed concern at the renewed attacks on the directorate by the House Science Committee.

As further evidence of NSF's continued strong commitment to the SBE directorate, Petersen noted that the search for a successor to Cora Marrett as Assistant Director was well underway. The screening committee has provided a list of possible replacements to the Director's office and both Petersen and Director Neal Lane would be interviewing candidates soon. They expect to have someone in place by the end of the summer.

The Committee also heard reports on the research conducted by the Anthropology and Geography programs and the Cognitive, Psychological and Language Science programs. In addition, Committee member John McTague, Vice President of Ford Motor Company, presented the results of the latest report

from the Council on Competitiveness, *Endless Frontier, Limited Resources*.

### **COSSA DELIVERS "POWERFUL" TESTIMONY ON NSF APPROPRIATION** HS

COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver testified on May 10 to the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Subcommittee on NSF's FY 1997 appropriation. In the testimony, Silver urged the Subcommittee to fund NSF at \$3.375 billion, \$50 billion above the President's request. This would result in an increase of 4.8 percent over the final FY 1996 appropriation.

He also provided what ranking Democrat, Rep. Louis Stokes (D-OH), called a "powerful statement" for making increased investments in science now. Silver declared: "The 21st Century is four years away. The future economic base of this country four decades from now will be based on the investment decisions we make now. ... The next century will belong to those who are scientifically and technologically educated to meet the political, economic and social challenges that await us. The investments in basic research of the past 50 years have paid off enormously in the maintenance of the U.S. as the major economic and political power in the world. We are in the midst of an age of new exciting discoveries. However, with the restrictions on discretionary spending, if investments in science are not increased, we will continue to live off borrowed capital, rather than preparing for the future."

In addition, Silver made the case for additional funding for SBE research and provided numerous examples of how basic research in these disciplines examines "the ever more complex and important human dimensions of issues and generates new knowledge and insights to help us understand human commonalities and human differences."

## LAWMAKERS WANT COURT APPROVAL FOR CENSUS SAMPLING *MB*

Seeking to prevent what they say will be an inevitable lawsuit, a bipartisan group of Members of Congress who oversee funding for the Census Bureau called upon Commerce Department officials to gain court approval before proceeding with plans to incorporate sampling into the 2000 survey.

At a May 2 hearing before the House Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Subcommittee, panel chair Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY), an outspoken critic of the Bureau, declined to take a position on the use of sampling, saying only he was skeptical that sampling - proposed in part to eliminate a repeat of 1990's differential undercount and subsequent flurry of litigation -- would avoid lawsuits.

Sampling for non-response, endorsed by a key panel at the National Academy of Sciences, is a controversial cornerstone of the Bureau's plans to improve the accuracy and lower the cost of the decennial survey. It received a cool reception at a House Subcommittee on Government Reform and Oversight hearing earlier this year. (see *Update*, March 4)

Saying it could appear to be "fiddling around with the rules of the game," Rogers said sampling would inevitably lead to a disagreement which the Bureau is "sailing directly into." Commerce Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Everett Ehrlich told the panel that he had prepared a list of case law citations supporting sampling and that the burden should not be on the Administration to seek court approval. Rogers replied that through obtaining prior court clearance, "at least you would know before you did it."

Rep. Julian Dixon (D-CA), urged Ehrlich to "exhaust every opportunity to support and verify" its plans, adding that the issue is bigger than who has the burden of proof in court, it is "the credibility of the Commerce Department." Panel member Rep. Alan Mollohan (D-WV) concurred

Committee members strongly left the impression that funding for sampling would be in jeopardy absent efforts to obtain court approval. This led Ehrlich to alter his stance, indicating he would consult with

Commerce's General Counsel on the proper legal channels to pursue.

In recent years this Subcommittee has been a rough road for the Census Bureau to travel. Absent the now-resolved issue of seeking some form of court clearance for sampling, the Bureau was well-received this year. Rogers appeared pleased with efforts to simplify the Census questionnaire, an initiative that was given greater urgency after Rogers referred to it last year as "junk mail."

## EXPANDED JUVENILE JUSTICE RESEARCH URGED *MB*

A key Senator and three leading criminologists recently called for greater research and evaluation of youth violence and efforts to prevent it.

Both the House and Senate have been holding hearings on the reauthorization of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP), an arm of the Justice Department. OJJDP has a small research component, but primarily provides various formula and discretionary grants. Many Republicans in Congress have called for turning the office's programs over to the states in the form of block grants. Critics of the federal effort in this area cite burdensome mandates placed upon states and localities, as well as a frustration over the inability to stop the rising tide of youth violence, which social scientists have said could get worse in coming years.

Sen. Fred Thompson (R-TN), who convened the May 8 hearing of his Subcommittee on Youth Violence, bemoaned that OJJDP "has spent more than a million dollars over the past 22 years in efforts to prevent youth violence" yet the problem has skyrocketed and "we seem to have little to show for all the prevention money that has been spent except... for all those mandates."

Sen. Joseph Biden, the Ranking Democrat on the panel, said the "bulk of the funding" at OJJDP should go to research. He opposed block grants, but also said that the status quo was not working. "We need new research for new problems... the problem is we've run out of information," Biden said. He said that states were unlikely to undertake research and evaluation

projects on their own, and that it is an inherent federal responsibility.

Marvin Wolfgang, Director of the Sellin Criminology Center at the University of Pennsylvania said that in the area of youth violence, advancing knowledge must take on the "moral equivalent of war." Saying "there are programs that do work," he said that violence prevention efforts must be evaluated "using the canons of science" and not anecdotal results. He prepared for the committee a summary of The Memphis and Shelby County Crime Report, which he recently co-authored along with Bernard Cohen and James Fox. The study evaluated several family and community-based intervention programs.

Del Elliott, Director of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, Boulder, told the committee it was imperative to consolidate and improve the quality of OJJDP's programs. Agreeing with Biden, he said there is a "heightened need for information... we don't know what works." He termed the work currently supported by OJJDP as "not good quality evaluation." He urged the office to focus on basic research and evaluation, noting that states and private foundations conduct the majority of demonstration programs in the area of violence prevention. What are currently eight separate data collection efforts supported by the agency should be consolidated into one quality effort, Elliott said. In addition, OJJDP's 24 training and technical assistance programs could be better performed by a single, coordinated center.

Terence Thornberry of the School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany, told the committee that he has watched OJJDP "through good times and bad" during the agency's lifespan. He praised the leadership of the current director, Shay Bilchik, under which, he said, "the office has made immense contributions to the development and dissemination of information about effective delinquency prevention programs." While praising OJJDP-sponsored research, he said that the office's evaluation research "is not an exact science; it is buffeted about by political, policy, and social forces that interfere with scientific designs."

The three social scientists, in response to a Biden question, each expressed opposition to turning OJJDP

to the states in block grants. "I have little or no faith in block grants" in these areas, Wolfgang said.

## **CDC FIREARMS RESEARCH DEFENDED AT HEARING** AS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Director David Satcher and Mark Rosenberg, Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC), defended firearms-related research funded by the CDC at a recent House Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Subcommittee hearing for the agency's FY 1997 budget.

Satcher and Rosenberg responded to a barrage of questions from several Republican Subcommittee members who feel that NCIPC's firearms research appears driven by political goals rather than unbiased scientific inquiry. NCIPC came under similar scrutiny during last year's appropriations hearings in the Senate. Rosenberg emphasized that violence is a critical public health problem, "even though the science leads to controversy... For individuals aged 15 - 24, violence is the second leading cause of death. Among African Americans aged 15 - 24 it is the leading cause." He said there has been a three-fold increase in homicides among teenagers. NCIPC and the research it funds is not anti-gun owner/law abiding citizen, emphasized Rosenberg. The research looks at the social environment -- the impact of such things as vacant buildings, lighted streets, access to guns, what to do to improve the ability of individuals to deal with violence, he said. CDC spends less than five percent of its overall funding for injury control on firearms research.

Rosenberg stressed that the NCIPC's greatest impact is tracking unintentional injuries -- motor vehicles, falls, fires, and drownings -- saving both lives and dollars. The violent, intentional injuries, he said, "is a rapid growing area and is very important to the CDC." The cost of injuries to the nation is \$225 billion, which he termed "a tremendous cost in terms of treatment and a lifetime of disability."

Rep. John Porter (R-IL), chairman of the Subcommittee, inquired whether NCIPC would release the data of researcher Arthur Kellerman, director of Emory University's Center for Injury Control, whose research has attracted the wrath of the National Rifle

Association. The NRA has targeted not only CDC's research on firearms, but has lobbied Congress to abolish the entire NCIPC. Rosenberg said that Kellerman has agreed to make the data available once he has completed his study.

NCIPC was established in June 1992 after the completion of a congressionally requested study by the National Academy of Sciences that recommended the creation at CDC of a national injury control center. It is the lead federal agency for injury prevention, and NCIPC is the only national center that coordinates research on the causes of, risk factors for, and solutions to a broad range of violence-related and accidental injuries. These injuries include homicides, suicides, youth violence, family and intimate violence, injuries from fires and burns, motor-vehicle crashes, and playground and day-care settings. In addition, the NCIPC administers a grants program for extramural research using a peer review system modeled after NIH.

### **AHCPR TO ESTABLISH CENTERS FOR EVIDENCE- BASED PRACTICE**

Beginning in Fiscal Year 1997 the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR) will no longer develop clinical practice guidelines announced Clifton R. Gaus, the agency's Administrator, during a recent appearance before the House Labor, HHS, Education Subcommittee. Responding to the Subcommittee's concern during last year's hearings, Gaus said AHCPR will propose creating a science-based partnership with the private sector to develop any new guidelines. To accomplish this, AHCPR will establish Centers for Evidence-Based Practice, maintained Gaus. He emphasized that the Centers' function will be to meet the "demand for the review and synthesis of medical evidence" by responding to request from private sector partners, including "producing literature reviews, evidence tables, decision analyses, meta-analyses, and other products on topics of national interest."

AHCPR would continue its research and evaluation activities, but would "broaden the focus of dissemination efforts from guidelines to the numerous approaches that can be used to promote the incorporation of scientific knowledge into day-to-day

clinical practice." Gaus also explained that "by working with other professional organizations and helping to make them science-based" there will be more adoption of the guidelines.

Responding to questions of whether AHCPR's work duplicates that of the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Care Financing Administration or the Veterans Administration, Gaus responded by emphasizing that "the agency is unique." Further stressing that the AHCPR co-funds research with the NIH and the CDC, Gaus said that he views this as coordination and not duplication. He also underscored that AHCPR conducts "reviews with HCFA, CDC and NIH on a routine basis -- highlighting that their personnel sits on AHCPR's review boards." A mechanism is in place so that there is not duplication, he said.

### **NIH REAUTHORIZATION HEARING LOOKS AT SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH**

At a recent hearing on the reauthorization of the National Institutes of Health, Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS), chair of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee, said, "we can all take great pride in the exceptional contributions the NIH has made to improving the health of our citizens." Kassebaum, who is not seeking re-election this year, has said that NIH reauthorization is a priority. The current authorization expires at the end of the 104th Congress. (*Update*, March 18)

The May 7th hearing examined the role of Academic Health Centers in the era of managed care, support strategies for clinical research, and training future biomedical researchers. Kassebaum hoped her panel would "gain a clearer perspective on the changing and complex economic environment in which academic institutions carry out their important research mission...and move toward further strategies whereby federal support may contribute effectively to the continuation of this important mission."

A number of witnesses made reference to the need for incorporating the social and behavioral sciences into health studies and training. Gail Warden, President and CEO of the Henry Ford Health System,

testified that market-based health reform, particularly managed care, "is a substantial threat to the research mission of academic health centers." Warden urged the panel to "recognize Academic Health Systems (clinical/research/teaching organizations) as a national resource for future of health care; balance short-term market focus on cost, with longer-term needs of society; expand public research portfolios to include population-based research (in both NIH and AHCPR budgets, for example); and bring delivery system innovation to the public domain -- fund and publish."

According to Warden, "there is far too little support for the information systems infrastructure to conduct research on populations, outcomes and the organization and financing of health care." He emphasized the need to increase the number of "multidisciplinary studies that focus on the interface between social, psychological, behavioral and biological dimensions of health, especially for high risk populations such as the elderly and the economically disadvantaged. We need population-based studies that address a variety of questions related to disease etiology, health service use and health management."

Other fundamental issues that need to be addressed by the NIH, said Warden, are "the distinction between public domain research, and research done by organizations for their own personal gain;" and the investment in "information systems that support population-based research; track longitudinal care processes, outcomes, and costs; provide opportunities for interactive learning and specialty consultation; assure the appropriate therapeutic and prevention approaches are chosen; and promote patient education and self-care."

### Too Many Researchers?

"If we are producing more scientists than we can employ in NIH-sponsored research, why should we increase funding for training?" asked Robert R. Rich, Vice President and Dean of Research at Baylor College of Medicine. This issue, he said, "has arisen during a time of transition from the rapid growth of federal research funding of the past twenty-five years, into an environment characterized by constrained federal resources and a much slower rate of growth." However, Rich declared, "A cut in training would be a serious mistake...Since we can't determine who are

going to be most creative and productive in ten or fifteen years." Rich emphasized that the "unemployment rate for trained researchers is actually very low and we must assure that it remains so." To do this, Rich said, we can employ highly trained people throughout our science-based economy, and in particular, reinvest them in science education at the secondary and collegiate level.

There is the need to broaden "the scope of the programs in which the Ph.D. is offered concurrently with the M.D. training to include certain non-biologic scientific disciplines such as biostatistics, epidemiology, economics and bioethics," said Janice G. Douglas, Professor of Medicine, Physiology and Biophysics and Vice Chair for Academic Affairs at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine.

Gail Cassell, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, testified that "economic studies have shown that money invested in research brings on average a 50 percent rate of return to U.S. society...Today the biotechnology industry accounts for over 100,000 jobs and \$8 billion in annual sales." She also emphasized that "the opportunity for translation of recent discoveries in molecular biology directly to diagnosis and treatment has never been greater." However, said Cassell, diverse teams of scientists, including behavioral scientists, basic scientists, individuals trained in comparative medicine and physician and dental scientists will be needed to translate the research.

Cassell also advocated for formal courses in biostatistics, epidemiology, design of clinical trials and the ethical considerations in performing research in humans as a part of training programs. She also spoke of the need to "improve racial and gender diversity in scientific mentors, as well as trainees... In times of severe budget constraints, sustained recruitment and mentoring of underrepresented minorities may be the most vulnerable," she told the committee.

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