

**VA, HUD PASSES HOUSE; NSF LOSES \$18 MILLION TO HUD AIDS PROGRAM** *145*

The House of Representatives passed the FY 2001 VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations bill by a vote of 256-169 on June 21. The bill contains the House recommendation for the National Science Foundation's (NSF) FY 2001 budget.

During the course of the bill's consideration, Representative Jerold Nadler (D-NY) offered an amendment to shift \$18 million from NSF's Office of Polar Programs to the Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program. Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), Chairman of the House Science Committee, and Representative Nick Smith (R-MI), head of the Basic Research Subcommittee, spoke in opposition to the Nadler amendment arguing that the offset should have come from another HUD program and not from NSF. The amendment carried by voice vote.

Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ) offered an amendment to restore NSF's funding to the President's request of \$4.6 billion. Joining Holt in speaking in support of his amendment were Representatives David Obey (D-WI), Ralph Hall (D-TX), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Bob Etheridge (D-NC), Alan Mollohan (D-WV), and John Olver (D-MA). VA, HUD Appropriations Subcommittee Chair James Walsh (R-NY) and Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) spoke against the amendment. Walsh bemoaned the low allocation the subcommittee received, and both opponents hinted that they would attempt to get NSF more funding when the bill gets to the House-Senate conference committee following Senate action. Since Holt did not offer any offsetting reductions from other programs in the bill, his amendment was ruled out of order.

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**PROPOSED CENSUS RULE GIVES BUREAU DIRECTOR FINAL AUTHORITY OVER DATA RELEASE; PUBLIC COMMENTS WELCOMED** *D14*

Although William Daley left the Department of Commerce to head Vice President Al Gore's presidential campaign, one of his last actions could have a significant impact on the operations of the Census Bureau. On June 20, the Commerce Department issued a proposed rule that would give the Director of the Census Bureau the final decision over whether or not to release data adjusted through scientific statistical methods (also known as sampling). The proposed rule will take effect after a 45 day comment period. It is available in the June 20 issue of the *Federal Register*: [www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/fedreg/a000620c.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a000620c.html). Comments on the proposed rule are due by August 4, 2000 and should be sent to John H. Thompson, Associate Director for Decennial Census, Bureau of the Census, Suitland Federal Center, Suitland and Silver Hill Roads, Building 2, Room 3586, Suitland, Maryland 20233.

Under the proposed rule, the Secretary of Commerce would delegate the authority to determine the "methodology to be used in calculating the tabulations of population reported to States and localities" to the Bureau director. In other words, the director of the Census Bureau would make the final decision over whether or not to release population figures adjusted through sampling or figures obtained solely through the Bureau's direct head count.

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To avoid any appearance of impropriety or political manipulation, the Bureau director would make the decision prior to the statutory deadline for transmitting the population data tabulations. For instance, the Director would make the decision before the April 1, 2001 deadline for transmission of population figures to the States for the purpose of redistricting. In this case, the Director would not have seen how the numbers would impact the drawing of congressional lines or the distribution of Federal funds. The decision to release adjusted or unadjusted numbers would be based solely on operational and methodological bases — whether the use of sampling is possible, whether it will increase the accuracy of the census, and whether sampling is compatible with statutory and resource constraints.

The Bureau Director would make his decision in consultation with an “Executive Steering Committee for A.C.E. [Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation] Policy” which would be composed of a number of senior career professionals including: the Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer; Principal Associate Director and Chief Financial Officer; Principal Associate Director for Programs; Chief of the Planning, Research, and Evaluation Division; Chief of the Decennial Statistical Studies Division; Chief of the Population Division; Senior Mathematical Statistician; and the Associate Director for Decennial Census, who would serve as the Committee’s chair.

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The proposed rule was crafted after the Census Bureau director transmitted to the Commerce Secretary a “Statement on the Feasibility of Using Statistical Methods to Improve the Accuracy of Census 2000.” In that document, the Bureau director, Kenneth Prewitt, noted that statistically adjusted numbers would be more accurate than the population figures derived solely from a traditional head count. The statement also indicated that the production of population figures for all non-apportionment purposes could be produced to meet the statutory April 2001 deadline.

#### Proposal Draws Criticism at House Hearing

As noted in the *Federal Register* announcement, the rule was designed to remove the census and the decision to release sampled or non-sampled numbers out of partisan politics. To insulate the decision from partisan politics, the rule would not allow the Census Bureau Director’s decision to be overturned by the Secretary of Commerce. The announcement reads: “Review of the Director’s decision by the Secretary of Commerce would at a minimum create the appearance that considerations other than those relating to statistical science were being taken into account, and could well allow the decision to be based on such irrelevant considerations. There is absolutely no role for non-scientific considerations in this process.”

Despite the intentions to remove the census and the sampling decision from partisan politics, the proposed rule was the subject of a rancorous hearing of the House Subcommittee on the Census. The June 22 hearing was originally scheduled as an oversight session, but quickly disintegrated into a debate about the merits, and the legality, of the proposed rule. Subcommittee Chair Representative Dan Miller (R-FL) criticized the rule and suggested that the decision of the Commerce Secretary to divest his authority to the Bureau Director was illegal. He called the rule “a half-hearted attempt to remove politics from the Census.” The Chairman suggested, as did Representative Tom Davis (R-VA), that the Census Bureau Director, as a political appointee, would fall in lock-step with the administration and support the release of statistically-adjusted numbers.

Prewitt noted that he was not interested in politics but in producing the most accurate census. He noted that the statistically-adjusted or sampled numbers would undoubtedly be more accurate than figures obtained from the direct head count. Miller proceeded to ask Prewitt whether he had ever contributed to a political campaign. Prewitt noted that the professionals at the Census Bureau do not follow the political races occurring throughout the country or the political composition of State legislatures and wholly dismissed the notion that Bureau officials would manipulate numbers to impact State and Federal elections.

### NIMH DIRECTOR: IT'S BEEN A GOOD YEAR

"It's been a good year" for attention to mental health issues and research noted National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Director Steven Hyman at the Institute's *Fourth Annual Research Roundtable*. He highlighted the fact that public interest in mental health issues has increased since last June's Roundtable meeting and the December 1999 release of the first-ever Surgeon General's *Report on Mental Health*. The media and public response to the Report, authored by Surgeon General David Satcher, has been "phenomenally positive." This report, he continued, has had an "enormous impact," particularly outside of the mental health specialties. The Surgeon General, according to Hyman, plans to initiate follow-up reports to address the particular mental illness and health concerns of racial and ethnic minorities and youth violence. He also noted that the Surgeon General designated the prevention of suicide – a lethal outcome of mental illness – as a public health priority.

Chronic noncommunicable diseases create enormous burden of disease and obstacles to economic development, said Hyman. He observed that the general director of the World Health Organization (WHO), Gro Harlem Brundtland, is also very interested in mental health issues. Each year the WHO dedicates a world health day. Hyman noted that mental health will be the focus in 2001. The effort by WHO, said Hyman, will extend the awareness and recognition that life depressions are real disorders worthy of treatment and help build capacity to identify and treat these illnesses. The

world, he noted, is beginning to recognize that these disorders are real and addressable.

At the same time of the increased attention to mental health issues and research, noted Hyman, the NIMH has been fortunate, through its staff and advisory committee, to move the Institute's portfolio into "a position to capitalize on the cutting edge of science." Hyman said that the NIMH is making a new commitment to determine the service needs of those suffering from the many forms of mental illness. The NIMH, he continued, has launched a major effort to determine the extent of mental illness in America, with certain projects focusing specifically on youth and ethnic and racial minorities. In a time when there are important disparities — gender, race, and ethnicity — the NIMH is interested in understanding the full picture of mental illness and risk factors for all Americans, said Hyman.

Hyman also stressed that it is very important for NIMH to combine basic behavioral science with public health issues. "It is clear to me, and the National Advisory Mental Health Council workgroup, that the field of behavioral science has much to offer in mental health." The workgroup's report, *Translating Behavioral Science Into Action*, said Hyman, offers recommendations for translating scientific achievement in behavioral research into clinical relevant advances, including an action plan for a practical strategy for enhancing the clinical contributions of behavioral science in the area of mental health. The report can be found on the NIMH web site: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov) (See *UPDATE*, February 7, 2000, No. 3).

He also emphasized that it was important to bring together behavioral science, clinical trials, and services research to address several unanswered questions: Why people don't come to treatment? Is it because they can't pay for it? Is it personal behavior, stigma, shame? Do parents fear being blamed?

He also addressed the problem of nonadherence (a topic of a 1999 COSSA congressional briefing). NIMH is seeking to understand how to build commitment and adherence to psychotherapy regimens, said Hyman. The Institute is also seeking to create a change in the system so that the practitioner understands the factors associated with

adherence. It is a very rich area for all of medicine, he continued. In the so-called "molecular revolution" without adherence medicine stays in the bottle. Hyman also noted that adherence is a factor in maintaining a good diet and getting enough exercise. The NIMH is looking to fund "very interesting ideas" in this area, said Hyman.

Hyman further called for research on how we can alter the behavior of providers to ensure that there is a decrease in the number of inappropriate diagnoses, citing as an example the use of computer-based screening tools.

Noting that suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in the U.S. and, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports, the third leading cause of death among 15 to 24 year old, Hyman stressed that NIMH continues to encourage researchers to submit applications to study suicide. Researchers, he said, should keep in mind that suicide is most meaningfully studied in the context of other psychopathological processes, including comorbid psychiatric and substance abuse disorders. We need, said Hyman, to delineate the relationship between clinical disorders and psychopathology, and suicidal behaviors in children and adolescents, as well as in elderly people, whom epidemiologic data show are at the highest risk for suicide.

The Institute, said Hyman, has targeted a significant portion of its funding to initiatives that have been deemed by the public as health emergencies, including: research on the use of medications in children; youth violence in schools and community, and suicide prevention. To address the issue of youth violence the Institute is focusing resources on understanding risk factors, experiences, and processes that are related to the development of aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior.

## BETTER DATA NEEDED ON CHILDREN

Major gaps remain in the Federal statistical system that must be filled if we are to have a complete picture of the quality of our children's lives, according to the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) fourth annual report on trends in the well-being of our Nation's children and

youth. The report, *Trends in the Well-Being of America's Children & Youth 1999*, contains the most recent and reliable estimates on more than 90 indicators of well-being.

The indicators are organized into five broad areas: 1) population, family, and neighborhood; 2) economic security; 3) health conditions and health care; 4) social development, behavioral health, and teen fertility; and 5) education and achievement.

The report is intended to provide a sense of how children and youth are faring overall. Recent findings include:

- \* Youth violence has been decreasing, with homicide rates down from 20.7 to 12.8 per thousand youth ages 15 to 19 between 1993 and 1997, and reported weapon carrying among 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students declined from 26 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 1997.
- \* There were 965,623 child victims of maltreatment in 1997. Of those cases 25 percent were classified as physical abuse, 12 percent as sexual abuse, 55 percent as neglect, 2 percent as medical neglect, 6 percent as emotional maltreatment, and 12 percent as "other" or "unknown" types of maltreatment.
- \* Median income for families with children increased between 1996 and 1997, from \$41,925 to \$43,545.

The 1999 report includes additional indicators based on the work of researchers from the Family and Child Well-Being Research Network, funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). The new indicators are developed from existing data sources.

## Gaps in Knowledge

There are, however, gaps in the Federal statistical system. For example, the report notes that there are "few measures of social development and health-related behaviors for very young and pre-teenage children that are measured on a regular basis." Other gaps cited in the report include:

- \* A lack of mental health measures for all ages of children;
- \* Positive measures of social development and related behaviors;

- \* Indicators that reflect the positive development desired for children and youth;
- \* Measures of parent-child interactions, critical to the social and intellectual development of children;
- \* An annual measure of whether both biological parents of a child are living in the household; and
- \* Reliable indicators of child homelessness.

According to the report, other areas in need of measurement development or improvements in the quality, consistency, and frequency of available data include child abuse and neglect, youth violent crime, day care quality, learning disabilities, and measures of children in institutionalized care.

The Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics is an interagency group of leaders of Federal agency and departments responsible for collecting data on children and youth. Member agencies play crucial roles in the production of the report, providing data and reviewing relevant text. The forum, created in 1995, will continue to develop strategies for improving the Federal statistical system in ways that preserve existing data while also filling in the gaps.

## CONTROLLING VIOLENCE OF AMERICA *DH*

On June 9 COSSA held a congressional briefing, "Controlling Violence in America," before a standing-room only crowd that included Federal agency officials, congressional staffers, and Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), member of the House Judiciary Committee. Two noted criminologists discussed handgun violence in America, interpersonal domestic violence, and rampage killings.

### Handgun Violence in America

Alfred Blumstein, Carnegie Mellon University Professor, Director of the National Consortium on Violence Research (NCOVR), and COSSA President, examined trends in homicide rates over the last two decades and offered explanations for the sharp increase between the mid 1980s and the early-1990s. He offered explanations for the decrease experienced since the mid-1990s and provided

policy prescriptions that might contribute to continued low rates of homicides in the United States.

Between 1985 and the early 1990s the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data showed a large increase in the Nation's homicide rate. This period, said Blumstein, was followed by a sharp decrease in the rate after 1995. To explain the trend, Blumstein disaggregated the homicide rate by age-specific murder arrest rates for 18, 20, 22, and 24 year olds and by weaponry (handguns, other guns, and non-guns).

He showed that between 1985 and 1993-94 the rise in the Nation's homicide rate was driven primarily by juveniles (18 years old) arrested for murder. The homicide arrest rate for this group increased to nearly 60 per 100,000 population in 1993-94 from roughly 23 per 100,000 population in 1985. Over this same period, Blumstein showed that the number of handgun homicides committed by juveniles younger than 18 more than quadrupled to nearly 900 in 1993-94 from roughly 200 in 1985. Blumstein suggested that "handguns had shown up in the hands of young people who didn't know how to deal with them." Older people, he said, may have had more handguns during this period, but they knew how to deal with them. The major thrust of this data, said Blumstein, is that young people (18 years old or less) with handguns led the rise in the Nation's homicide rate.

After 1995 that rate experienced a sharp decline that has continued through subsequent years. Blumstein attributed the decline to policy initiatives designed to take the guns out of the hands of those who could not use them. He pointed to the Brady Bill and increased police aggressiveness in taking guns out of circulation as two examples of policies that contributed to the decline in the homicide rate. Declining drug markets, especially for crack cocaine, said Blumstein, also contributed to this decline. He explained that the Nation's robust economy was also a factor, because "a legitimate job provides a strong incentive for conformity."

### Interpersonal Domestic Violence

Laura Dugan, Georgia State University Professor and NCOVR researcher, led a discussion on interpersonal domestic violence. Her talk centered

around a research project funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) designed to determine which "exposure reduction" policies have been effective in reducing intimate partner homicides.

Like the Nation's overall homicide rate, the rate of intimate partner homicide has declined over the last two decades, according to Dugan. A recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, said Dugan, showed that the intimate partner homicide rate had declined 39 percent between 1976 and 1998. During this same period, she said, the number of resources available to women or persons who had been victimized or abused by their intimate partner had "increased tremendously."

The decline has not been equal across different victim types. For instance, Dugan explained that the rate for intimate partner homicides for black married males as victims dropped by 87 percent between 1976 and 1996. More women, however, were killed in 1996 by their unmarried partners than in 1976. These differences and other disparities, said Dugan, lead to the question: Is there something that is helping to save the lives of some intimates but not necessarily saving the lives of others?

Dugan suggested that "exposure reduction" policies, including women's increased participation in the labor force, services for domestic violence victims, Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits, and legal advocacy services, benefitted some groups of individuals more than others. Dugan focused her comments on the impact of AFDC benefits, which was replaced in the 1996 welfare reform bill by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and legal advocacy services, which help victims navigate through the legal system to obtain protection from abusive partners.

With respect to AFDC, Dugan noted that in areas with higher AFDC benefits fewer black unmarried males, white unmarried males, and black unmarried females were killed. There was no association, she said, between AFDC benefits and unmarried white females. Legal advocacy services, she said, had differing impacts for white and black women. For instance, white married women experienced a decreased homicide rate as legal advocacy services were strengthened, while rates of intimate partner

homicide for black women were unaffected by the strength of these services.

Dugan's research, which she conducted with Carnegie Mellon University Professor Daniel Nagin and University of Missouri, St. Louis Professor Richard Rosenfeld, will be published soon by the NIJ. Check out NIJ's web site for the final version. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij).

### Rampage Killings

Fox Butterfield, noted *New York Times* crime reporter, was scheduled to discuss his research on rampage killings. However, due to a medical emergency, Butterfield could not attend the briefing. Instead, Blumstein, after consulting with Butterfield, spoke on this provocative topic.

Butterfield, along with several other *Times* reporters, wrote a series on rampage killers that appeared in the newspaper several months ago. Butterfield and his colleagues compiled information on 100 rampage killers. Blumstein's comments revolved around some of their striking observations.

Rampage killers, according to Blumstein, are those who over a relatively short period of time kill multiple individuals. One striking characteristic of the 100 rampage killers studied by the *Times*, said Blumstein, is that over half suffered from some form of mental illness. Half of the rampage killers documented by the *Times* were treated for mental illness, while the other 50 percent were either mentally ill and not treated or not mentally ill. Under Federal law it is illegal to sell a gun to an individual who has been committed to a mental institution. However, a common thread of recent rampage killings is the use of high-powered weaponry. This suggests, said Blumstein, that information regarding mental illness is not always available to effectuate the denials. Blumstein concluded that some steps should be taken to ensure that guns are not placed in the hands of a high-risk population like the mentally ill.

The rampage killers series is available on the *Times* web site at: [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com). COSSA plans to produce a full edited transcript of the briefing which will be available in August.

## VA, HUD PASSES HOUSE (continued from page 1)

Thus, coming out of the House NSF has \$4.046 billion, an increase of \$149 million over FY 2000. Since the Office of Polar Programs is in the Research and Related Activities account, it finishes with \$3.117 billion, an increase of \$153 million over last year.

The bill also allocated \$40 million to the Office of Policy Development and Research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This is a \$5 million decrease from 2000 and a \$22 million reduction from the president's request. According to the House Committee report, of the \$40 million, \$10 million will continue funding for the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH) initiative, while \$3 million is to "be used exclusively for program evaluation and data collection to support strategic planning, performance measurement, and budget."

Action in the Senate has been postponed. It appears that the Senate needs to figure out a way to find more allocation dollars for the VA, HUD Subcommittee and that may not be easy. Senate leaders still hope to have the bill through the Senate before the August recess.

## RURAL POOR FACE ROUGH ROAD MOVING FROM WELFARE TO WORK

Rural labor markets have higher unemployment and less earnings growth than urban labor markets, according to a report released by the Northwestern University/ University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research (JCPR) and the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) at a congressional research briefing held June 21. The event featured several social scientists who examined various aspects of welfare reform and its impact on rural poverty. Chuck Fluharty, head of RUPRI, served as the session's moderator.

Daniel Lichter, Ohio State University sociologist, summarized recent trends in poverty and earnings in rural and urban areas. Sheena McConnell, Mathematica Policy Research economist, examined the changing participation rates in the food stamps program and discussed the

experiences of participants as welfare reform has evolved in both rural and urban settings. Oregon State University Economist Bruce Weber and Northwestern University Economist Greg Duncan, also head of the JCPR, summarized the findings from a recent conference examining the rural dimensions of welfare reform.

A copy of the report, released at the briefing funded by the Farm Foundation, is available online at: [www.jcpr.org/conferences/rural-summary.pdf](http://www.jcpr.org/conferences/rural-summary.pdf).

## SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the sponsoring agency or organization for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

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The Spencer Foundation, through its Dissertation Fellowships program, seeks to encourage a new generation of scholars from a variety of fields to undertake research relevant to the improvement of education. Fellowship applicants must be candidates for the doctoral degree in any field of study at a graduate school in the United States, although applicants need not be United States citizens. Dissertation topics must, however, concern education and all pre-dissertation requirements must be completed by June 1, 2001. The Spencer Foundation intends to award approximately 30 non-renewable fellowships of \$20,000 to support completion of the dissertation. This amount must be expended within two years of the award in accordance with the work plan provided by the candidate. Requests for required application forms must be received by October 6, 2000, and application materials must be submitted by mail and postmarked by October 18, 2000. For further information, or for application material, contact the Spencer Foundation by mail: Spencer Foundation Fellowships, The Spencer Foundation, 875 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 3930, Chicago, IL, 60611-1803; by telephone: 312/337-7000; or by web: [www.spencer.org](http://www.spencer.org).

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