



# COSSA Washington Update

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## APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS COMMENCES: NIH HALCYON DAYS OVER; EDUCATION RESEARCH GETS BIG BOOST

After many discussions on how to allocate more dollars for domestic discretionary spending, the House Appropriations Committee began the process of marking up the 13 FY 2004 spending bills on June 12. With agreement from the White House that a small amount of funding specified for Defense spending in the budget resolution could be moved to the domestic side and a budget gimmick that will allow for increased spending for education, the House panel provided its Subcommittees with their 302(b) allocations on June 11. The total overall figure for discretionary funding for FY 2004 will be \$787.4 billion, a number considered unworkable by many appropriators, especially Democrats.

The Military Construction and Homeland Security bills were the first out of the block, with Subcommittee allocations on June 12. The Agriculture bill followed on June 17, Interior and Defense on June 18, and Legislative Branch on June 19. That same day, the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Subcommittee marked up its massive bill. The VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Subcommittee, whose jurisdiction includes the National Science Foundation, will probably mark up after the July 4th recess. Some highlights from the bills, so far:

The House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee provided the **National Institutes of Health** a budget of \$27.7 billion, a \$682 million

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## BIAS CHARGED AT HOUSE HEARING ON TITLE VI INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

On June 19, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Select Education held a hearing on international programs at American colleges and universities. These programs are authorized under Title VI of the Higher Education Act, which is up for reauthorization this year.

Rep. Phil Gingrey (R-GA) led the hearing in place of Chairman Peter Hoekstra (R-MI), who had a conflict arise. Gingrey explained to the packed audience that "With mounting global tensions, some programs under the Higher Education Act that support foreign

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## APPROPRIATIONS, (Continued from Page 1)

increase over the FY 2003 funding level. Without taking one-time costs into consideration, the sum represents a 2.5 percent increase. But with the one-time costs in FY 2003, the actual increase is approximately 7 percent. This sum represents a dramatic slowdown from the 15 percent increases received in recent years.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention received a budget of \$4.55 billion, \$57 million above last year and \$233 million above the budget request. For CDC's **Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion** activities, the bill recommends \$862 million, \$72 million above the FY 2003 funding level and \$27 million more than the requested amount. The bill provides \$125.9 million in funding for the **National Center for Health Statistics**. This sum includes \$112.7 million in appropriations and \$13.2 million through the Public Health Service's 1 percent evaluation set-aside. The total is the same as the FY 2003 funding level, which came entirely from the set aside.

The bill also provides \$303.7 million, entirely through interagency transfers of evaluation funds, for the **Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality**. This sum is the same as in FY 2003, but \$24.7 million more than the requested amount. Of note, the Agency is not provided the requested funds for homeland security activities. For the **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**, the bill provides \$3.32 billion, an increase of \$191.5 million above the FY 2003 funding level but \$64.3 million less than the requested amount.

The Subcommittee provided \$185 million, a significant 33 percent increase over last year, for **Education Research** and a 12 percent overall increase for the Institute of Education Sciences (see related story on p. 3). The Administration's request to abolish the Regional Laboratories was rejected. The **National Center for Education Statistics** received \$95 million, a boost of close to \$6 million over FY 2003.

The Subcommittee did not restore the across-the-board cut from FY 2003, thus leaving the **Javits Fellowship Program** at \$9.935 million, instead of the \$10 million the Administration requested. **International Education and Foreign Language** programs were funded at \$107.8 million, the same as last year. Once again, the Congress rejected the Administration's request to abolish the **Thurgood Marshall Legal Opportunity** program, keeping it at last year's level of slightly less than \$5 million.

The panel gave the **Bureau of Labor Statistics** its requested increase to total funding of \$512.3 million, a boost of \$20 million over FY 2003.

The **Science and Technology** directorate at the **Department of Homeland Security** received a large increase of \$349 million to a \$900.4 million total. Since Congress believes the mission of this directorate is "to develop and deploy cutting edge technologies and new capabilities to secure our homeland," most of the funding is slated for things like radiation detection technologies, interoperable public safety communications, public safety technology centers, and critical infrastructure protection. Of the \$900.4 million, \$35 million, an increase of \$25 million over the budget request, is recommended for university-based centers of excellence and the homeland security scholarships and fellowships program. (For background, see *Update*, May 23, 2003).

In the Agriculture bill, the House Subcommittee provided \$180.4 million for the **Hatch Act** Formula program, restoring the across-the-board cut from FY 2003. Funding recommended for the **National Research Initiative Competitive Grants** program was \$148.2 million, below the FY 2003 level of \$166 million, and significantly less than the \$200 million request.

All the bills now move forward to full Appropriations Committee markup and then to the House floor. The Senate will begin to get into the act the week of June 23, with scheduled subcommittee markups of the Labor, HHS, Education and Defense spending bills.

## TITLE VI BIAS, (Continued from Page 1)

language and area studies centers have recently attracted national attention and concern due to the perception of their teachings and policies."

This quote set the stage for Stanley Kurtz, Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, who charged that "Title VI-funded programs in Middle Eastern Studies (and other area studies) tend to purvey extreme and one-sided criticisms of American foreign policy." He asserted that these programs routinely condemn the United States as a bully and habitual perpetrator of genocide, relying on the "post-colonial" writings of Edward Said, a Columbia Professor of English and Comparative Literature. Furthermore, Kurtz professed that these programs "have leveled a boycott against the National Security Education Program (NSEP), which

supports foreign language study for students who agree to work for national security-related agencies after graduation.” (For more on the NSEP, see *Update*, June 9, 2003).

Kurtz’s testimony was immediately refuted by Gilbert Merkx, Vice Provost for International Affairs at Duke University, who asserted that no boycott exists. Merkx spoke about his longtime involvement with the NSEP and gave several examples of students under his charge who have served the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community in a number of capacities. He also noted that “every Title VI dollar granted leverages more than 10 dollars out of educational institutions receiving grants.”

Terry Hartle, Senior Vice President for Government and Public Affairs at the American Council on Education, entered the discussion asserting that “Kurtz’s charges are baseless and without merit.” He explained that criticism is exaggerated and misguided – only a small portion of Title VI grantees has generated controversy. In addition, the attacks on Said are unfounded as “Many Middle East Center scholars disagree with Kurtz that Said is the dominant intellectual paradigm of their field.” COSSA signed on to Hartle’s full testimony, which can be accessed at <http://www.acenet.edu>.

Gingrey asked if there is a Federal role to insure that Title VI programs remain fair and balanced. Hartle said that this could be dangerous in that teachings and philosophies could spin too far in the direction of the ruling political climate in Washington. Kurtz, however, urged the creation of a supervisory board. Membership could include relevant cabinet secretaries, the national security advisor, and presidential appointees consisting of former ambassadors and leaders in the field of international business. Merkx argued that such a board would be ineffective and that the current peer review system includes representatives of key government agencies and works well.

Kurtz pressed his argument that anti-American bias is pervasive in a number of the area studies, including the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. In response, Hartle urged the Subcommittee to commission an independent third party (such as the National Academies) to conduct a study on the extent of bias. Gingrey thanked the witnesses for appearing and stressed that in the post-September 11 era, Title VI is a vital program as the U.S. strives to be viewed as even handed throughout the rest of the world.

## CHANGING THE FACE OF EDUCATION RESEARCH: THE NEW IES

At a recent meeting at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, Russ Whitehurst, Director of the newly constituted Institute of Education Sciences (IES), outlined his hopes for the agency, which has replaced the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. IES was created by the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002. IES’s goal, according to Whitehurst, is to “change the face of education research in the United States” and thus make education practice based on science.

The context of making these alterations, Whitehurst noted, was the many references to scientifically based research in the “No Child Left Behind” elementary and secondary education act. He also chided the failure of current practice to generate progress, resolve competing approaches, and avoid fad and fancy. He declared that educational research must learn from the success of evidence-based practice in other fields, particularly medicine.

Asserting that “educational practice is pre-empirical” and that within the education world, “empirical currency is so degraded,” Whitehurst pointed to the phenomena of “you’ve got your study, I’ve got mine,” as the way education research is viewed. The new IES is out to change all that.

The Institute will have three main components as well as a National Board for Education Sciences to oversee its operations. The National Center for Educational Research will focus on funding academic research studies. The National Center for Educational Statistics’ (NCES) mission will remain essentially unchanged. The National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance will centralize all evaluations conducted by the Department and focus on impact rather than implementation of programs. It will also include the National Library of Education, the Regional Laboratories, and the Education Research Information Clearinghouses (ERIC). The Board will have 16 presidentially nominated, Senate confirmed members. Its job will be to approve the IES’ priorities. The first appointments are expected in two-three months.

### Seeking New Staff

The White House has announced a choice for Commissioner of NCES (see *Update*, June 9, 2003), but Whitehurst has encountered some difficulties in filling the positions to lead the other two components. He also

hopes to reorganize IES, streamlining the old OERI staff, and using authority granted in the Department of Homeland Security Act to reshape the workforce. Part of this plan will include bringing academic researchers and practitioners into the agency in Excepted Service positions (outside the civil service), for up to six years. Whitehurst, who has a six year term by statute, to provide him independence, committed himself to staying for his full term.

At present, the IES research program focus is focused on: Preschool Curriculum, Reading Comprehension, Cognition and Student Learning, Mathematics Education, Teacher Quality, Socialization and Character Development, and English Language Acquisition. The agency will continue to participate in the Interagency Education Research Initiative, a joint program co-funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. For the moment, IES has decided to focus its investment, relegating Field Initiated Studies to the back burner, until significantly more funds are allocated to the Institute.

In conducting evaluations, Whitehurst argued that it was imperative that randomized control experiments be the design of choice. On the agenda for evaluation are such programs as: Reading First, Early Reading First, Title I, Technology, Bilingual Programs, Even Start, Illiteracy, Alternative Certification, Magnet Schools, Drug Prevention and Safety, and Charter Schools. Whitehurst is well aware that even scientifically-based evaluations sometimes run up against celebrity politics as was demonstrated in the recent denigration of a study that determined that after-school programs did not contribute significantly to improved educational experiences for children. At a hearing, Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who sponsored a successful referendum in California to provide more funding for after-school activities, made clear that despite the study they still believed that these programs were worthwhile.

### **What Works Clearinghouse**

In helping to close the gap between research and practice, IES has created a What Works Clearinghouse. Whitehurst believes this will be a “substantial lever for change in education.” The idea is to provide a Food and Drug Administration-like vetting of educational products and research to provide “a trusted source” for practitioners. The clearinghouse is run by the American Institutes for Research and the

Campbell Collaboration to provide an arms-length relation with the Department. The What Works topics for 2003-04 include: beginning reading interventions, K-12 math curriculum, preventing high school dropout, programs to increase adult literacy, peer assisted learning in elementary schools, interventions to reduce delinquent and disorderly behavior, and interventions for elementary English language learners. For more information on the What Works Clearinghouse go to: [www.w-w-c.org](http://www.w-w-c.org).

Whitehurst and the Department are also out to change the ERIC system. The IES director declared that ERIC “will not look like it does now.” It is now a system that has 19 separate centers, 16 of which focus on subject matter, whose goal is to disseminate scholarly information to users. The current system, Whitehurst argued, is inefficient, laborious, non-punctual, duplicative, not well-vetted, focuses too much on “gray” literature, studies outside of peer-reviewed journals, and does not provide the full-text of articles online. A new competition will soon commence with consolidation and improvement the major goals.

If all these changes occur, Whitehurst believes that IES will supply high quality, relevant research, evaluation, and statistics, and the tools to utilize the results. It will increase incentives for evidence-based decision making and the practice of evidence-based education will become routine. This will lead to continuously improved education across the nation.

### **INSEL MEETS WITH NIMH'S PARTNERS IN RESEARCH AT ANNUAL ROUNDTABLE**

On June 10, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) held its 2003 Research Roundtable. Although it was NIMH Director Thomas Insel's first roundtable, it was the Institute's seventh such annual gathering of its “Partners in Research.”

Welcoming the participants, Insel observed, “Never before have the convergence of progress in different areas of science and their related technologies offered such hope of achieving a better understanding of the brain and behavior,” Insel related. “Our rapidly expanding knowledge of how the brain works in health and illness, combined with modern technologies of neuroscience and with progress in behavioral and clinical sciences, will lead to new conceptualizations of how to assess symptoms, based on the underlying brain

dysfunctions, and then how to tailor treatments to address specific problems,” he continued.

### **Insel’s Vision for NIMH**

Insel related to the group that his vision for NIMH falls in three areas: translation, new therapeutics, and services.

“I believe we have a great opportunity now to translate the findings from basic research into the clinical arena,” noted Insel. He defined translation as the taking of insights from modern neuroscience in a way that is more effective for public health needs. We have insights now that we didn’t have a decade ago. Noting the completion of the human genome project, Insel observed that mental disorders are not single gene disorders. Understanding variation and how that variation plays into behavior is what the genome will be about. Without question, this is the most exciting time to embark on that science, Insel exclaimed. We have an opportunity like we never had before, he continued.

He noted that we are blessed to have very good medications for mental disorders. However, there is a gap in the knowledge of how these medications work. We can do better, Insel declared, and observed that those in the mental health field do not talk about cures. The field needs to move in this direction, he asserted. He noted that the field “cannot be satisfied with treatments that allow people to *almost* function.”

Services, Insel noted, are an important part of the NIMH’s mission. He explained that most mental health problems are dealt with outside of the traditional mental health system. Treatment is being given in jails, schools, and nursing homes and not in the offices of mental health professionals. Much of the mental health expertise does not get delivered. Accordingly, most patients do not receive optimal care.

Finally, Insel observed that the campaign to double NIH’s budget over five years succeeded in bringing a tremendous change. He lauded the “robust increase,” approximately 80 percent, which has allowed the NIMH to fund a “lot of new initiatives.”

Unfortunately, Insel observed, the rate of increases will stop and flatten out to approximately 3 percent over the next few years. Accordingly, the Institute will have to invest in studies that will have a higher yield. “Finding funds for high risk research will be more difficult,” Insel warned.

## **OBESITY RESEARCH AT NIH UNDERGOES CHANGES**

On June 13, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease’s (NIDDK) National Task Force on Prevention and Treatment of Obesity held its last official meeting. According to NIDDK Director Allen Spiegel, obesity research is undergoing a change at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and at NIDDK. The changes, he noted are organizational and not bureaucratic.

This transformation, announced Spiegel, is reflected in NIH Director Elias Zerhouni’s creation of an NIH-wide Obesity Research Task Force. Zerhouni has identified obesity research as an important NIH priority, with involvement of multiple institutes and centers, Spiegel explained. Accordingly, the NIH as a whole is taking new steps to strengthen its efforts to combat the obesity epidemic.

To minimize the confusion, the National Task Force has been reconstituted as the NIDDK Clinical Obesity Research Panel. The name change “does not downgrade the work of the task force,” Spiegel emphasized.

“The NIH clearly can and must play a major role in addressing the increasingly severe obesity epidemic and its serious complications for public health,” said Spiegel. He cautioned, however, that obesity is a multidimensional problem and the answer cannot come from NIH alone. Spiegel questioned where the NIH’s mission ends and when it blends into the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s mission? We will see as the plan develops, he answered.

The new NIH Obesity Research Task Force will be co-chaired by Spiegel and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) Director Claude Lenfant and will include representatives from many NIH components.

Spiegel underscored the need for an integrated approach to obesity and lamented that there is “too often a polarization” in the obesity research field. Until we bring the social, behavioral, and environmental together with the biomedical in a science-based way, inroads into combating obesity will not be made.

The Task Force will develop a strategic plan, and identify areas of great scientific opportunity, monitor the implementation of the strategic plan and serve as a point of contact for obesity research-related issues between NIH and external agencies, Spiegel noted.

He commended the NHLBI's efforts in this area and the Institute's establishment of major translation programs. Likewise, he commended the National Cancer Institute's efforts in this area as well.

Spiegel explained that there will be an NIH intramural research component to the obesity research plan. Accordingly, a coordinated intramural obesity research program is being developed by the NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research and a steering committee of scientific directors from nine institutes and centers, chaired by NIDDK's Director of Intramural Research.

He emphasized the need for standards of evidence from a variety of sources and noted that the Task Force will receive input from the extramural research community, lay leaders, and the public to inform the NIH Obesity Research Plan.

The task force is building a framework around six areas:

1. Identification of genetic, behavioral, and environmental factors;
2. Understanding pathogenesis of obesity and its co-morbidities;
3. Prevention and treatment of obesity;
4. Policy, health services, economics, translation to practice;
5. Enabling technologies;
6. Development of multidisciplinary research teams.

He called for an intense focus on children and emphasized the need to study women in childbearing age, who will transmit the risk of obesity to their progeny if the vicious cycle continues.

The goals of the NIH Task Force are currently being generated, related Spiegel. The goals will represent a broad spectrum of obesity research areas. There will be maximum collaboration between the NIH institutes and centers, capitalizing on their expertise and interest in developing a research initiative. The hallmark of the Task Force is that it will allow the institutes and centers to do together things that are not possible alone. He cited the need for an economic analysis as an example. Consequently, this will minimize redundancy and maximize efficiency.

The Task Force also discussed a number of obesity initiatives planned by the Institute for FY 2004. These include:

**Modifiable Determinants of Excessive Weight Gain and Obesity among Children** – a program announcement is being planned for release in August 2003 and an RFA following a workshop is being planned for FY 2005. The concept for developing the initiative recognizes that the actual contributions to the obesity epidemic that are amenable to intervention are poorly characterized. Specifically, little information is available on the relative contributions of the environmental and behavioral factors that lead to excessive weight gain and obesity among children.

Numerous questions regarding the risks of excessive weight gain and obesity need to be examined, such as: What are the relative contributions of home and school environments? What are the effects within the home of television and computer usage? Does a lack of recess and sports participation at school have an effect? Do proximity to and frequent use of fast food outlets increase the risk of obesity?

The initiative is based on the fact that the information on these and other possible predictors of weight gain and obesity is "surprisingly sparse, based largely on anecdote and studies not designed to answer such questions."

A second initiative on **Long-Term Weight Maintenance – Basic and Clinical Studies** is being planned for October 2003, using a Special Emphasis Program Announcement. The initiative recognizes that long-term maintenance of weight loss is problematic. It is noted that on average, among treatment-seeking populations, approximately one-third of lost weight is regained by one year; by five years, most or all of previously-lost weight is regained.

Studies are needed that, in addition to elucidating the pathophysiologic mechanisms underlying weight regain after intentional weight loss, characterize the behavioral and psychological factors predictive of weight regain. Investigations into behavioral strategies for promoting long-term weight-loss maintenance, such as extended or more frequent patient contact, use of technology to enhance self-monitoring behaviors, social supports, motivational interviewing, etc., may lead to improved long-term outcomes after weight loss through a variety of methodologies. The impact of differing types, intensity, and frequency of physical activity in long-term maintenance could also be investigated.

## MIDDLE CHILDHOOD: A LOOK AT RESEARCH

In recent years, the American populace and policymakers have become increasingly concerned about early childhood development and the Early Head Start Program. And due to the increase of youth violence, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy, legislation has been geared toward assisting adolescents through outreach/prevention programs. Policymakers, however, tend to lose focus on the social development of children during middle childhood. Contrary to popular belief, the behavioral and social development of a child during middle childhood – defined as ages 5 thru 12 – may be the harbinger of behavior during adolescence.

According to Katherine Magnuson from Columbia University's School of Social Work, "What children bring to and learn during middle childhood – their experiences, abilities, and behaviors in early childhood as well as their mothers' characteristics – are important predictors of their outcomes in early adolescence." Accordingly, the MacArthur Foundation Research Network, in conjunction with the William T. Grant Foundation, W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the National Institute of Child and Health and Human Development (NICHD), sponsored a two-day conference, entitled "Building Pathways to Success: Research, Policy, and Practice on Development in Middle Childhood," to examine the impact of out of school (OST) activities and parental involvement in middle childhood and their correlation to behavioral and social development.

Resonating on the theory that middle childhood affects many aspects of a person's life through adulthood, conference leaders acknowledged that research, policy, and practice need to be better connected via communication to continue the momentum in middle childhood research. Anne Peterson, President of the Kellogg Foundation, asserted, "Research must be conducted that addresses policy questions and issues regarding research quality and funding."

Middle childhood has been described as "the gateway to adolescence" because the critical events that take place during this period have a substantial impact on adolescent and even adult development. Leon Feinstein of the

Institute of Education in London emphasized, however, "It is not uncommon for children to perform well in early childhood but then fall back in mid-childhood and suffer negative consequences into adult life. Support in the mid-childhood period may provide a policy response."

Research has concluded that OST activities are important, especially for low-income children's achievement and behavior during middle childhood. Sandra Simpkins, University of Michigan, concurs: "Youth's participation in activities during middle childhood is critical for the development of competencies and values, adolescent activity participation, and adolescent mental health." Children who participated in structured activities during middle childhood displayed more positive social behavior, positive peer relations and self-confidence. These findings caused researchers to conclude that middle childhood is a fundamental period in which children discover their values and social competence.

Another important component to middle childhood development is children's relationship to mother in conjunction with family dynamics and structure. Magnuson states, "In particular, children's home environment and their perceptions of their teachers and schools are linked to their behavior and achievement in early adolescence." The personal relationship developed between mother and child during middle childhood has proven to be crucial in the transition to adolescence.

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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 sciences.

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Surprisingly, children's emotions can have a symbiotic relationship to mother's emotions, including depression. Sara Jaffee of the Institute of Psychiatry in London found that "children's antisocial behavior and depressive symptoms can influence mother's depression as well as being influenced by them." In addition, a mother's symptoms of anxiety were reciprocally related to their children's anxious behavior. Studies have proven that during middle childhood, parents need to acknowledge that for their children to move into adolescence without difficulty they need to give children adequate nutrition, multiple supportive relationships, a level of connectedness, and active participation in daily and extracurricular activities.

Although researchers have unveiled promising breakthroughs in mid-childhood, more research is needed before data is utilized by policymakers. According to Aletha C. Houston, Professor at the University of Texas-Austin and former COSSA seminar speaker, "researchers need to support partnerships with practitioners and intermediaries and put research into practice." She stressed the need for better definitional and descriptive research that would eventually lead to programs that have frameworks tailored to the specific needs of children during every stage of childhood development.

Moreover, Jim Connell, Director of Research at the Institute for Research and Reform in Education, recommended researchers not forget the "vigor" involved with child development. He contends, "The massive investment for researchers should be trying to enhance child performance instead of focusing on youth development." In closing, Martha Moorehouse, Director of the Division of Children and Youth Policy in the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation's office at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, asked researchers where policy and research intersect. Moorehouse indicated that only when the fine lines of research and policy are no longer ambiguous would researchers and policymakers be able to assist each other.

**Editor's Note:** Due to the July 4th holiday, the next issue of *Update* will be published on July 14.

Happy Independence Day!

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