



# COSSA

## Washington Update

Consortium of Social  
Science Associations

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### NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION FACES SPENDING PANELS

Faced with its annual ritual of defending its proposed budget, leaders of the National Science Foundation (NSF) put the best face they could on a FY 2004 proposal that calls for only a 3 percent increase over last year. The four principals of the House and Senate VA-HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees made it quite clear that they considered the Administration's proposal "disappointing."

Both Chairmen, Sen. Christopher Bond (R-MO) and Rep. James Walsh (R-NY), and their respective Ranking Members, Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Rep. Alan Mollohan (D-WV), pointed to last year's reauthorization bill that was supposed to put NSF on a budget-doubling path over the next five years. The level of funding authorized in the bill for FY 2004 is \$6.39 billion; the FY 2004 appropriations request is \$5.48 billion; the final FY 2003 appropriation was \$5.31 billion.

All four also noted that the proposed increase for Research and Related Activities was even "more dismal," up just 1.2 percent over FY 2003. Mikulski acknowledged that the NSF had no control over the spending plan, blaming the small increases on the Office of Management and Budget.

In testimony to the Senate panel on April 3 and to the House Subcommittee on April 11, NSF Director Rita Colwell reiterated the mantra that this was a good budget developed before the final FY 2003 appropriation number was known. Thus, the Administration contends that NSF's 9 percent increase over the proposed FY 2003 *request* was quite generous.

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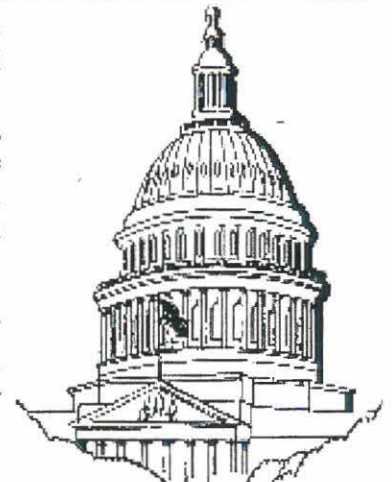
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### NIH DIRECTOR APPEARS BEFORE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE

Appearing before the House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, on April 1, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Elias Zerhouni expressed his "deepest appreciation for the generous and bipartisan support of the Congress, [Department of Health and Human Services] Secretary Tommy Thompson, President Bush, and the American people for the completion of the doubling of the NIH budget this year." He also noted his recognition and appreciation of the extraordinary effort of the Committee and the leadership of the Subcommittee's Chairman, Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH), without whom "doubling would not have occurred."

We have witnessed nothing short of a revolution in science over the past five years," Zerhouni noted and observed that he sees the current year as an "overture" rather than a grand finale. "As the 21st Century begins to unfold, we are poised to make quantum leaps in our knowledge about how to improve people's health," he told the panel.

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## Human and Social Dynamics Questioned

Director Colwell, in her testimony to both Subcommittees, noted the proposed Human and Social Dynamics (HSD) priority for social and behavioral science research asking for an investment of \$24.5 million that “will fund research and new techniques to deepen our understanding of the impacts of change on our lives and on our institutions.”

Chairman Bond seemed somewhat skeptical of this new priority. He wondered why the “human and behavioral sciences” were becoming a priority at a time when the physical sciences were still being “shortchanged.” The deprivations of the physical sciences have become a rallying cry, since the life sciences have prospered with the doubling of the National Institutes of Health budget. The proposed NSF budget funds the math and physical sciences at over \$1 billion compared to the social and behavioral sciences directorate at \$211 million.

Rep. Virgil Goode (R-VA) also inquired about the HSD priority at the House hearing. He appeared satisfied with Colwell’s response describing HSD’s proposed focus on human factors, risk assessment, and the overall need to understand behavior, including terrorism.

The Senate hearing got cut short because of what Bond called “a food fight on the floor over the Supplemental” appropriations bill. The House hearing delved into a number of other issues including NSF’s structure and staffing. Last year’s appropriations report language requested a study by the National Academy of Public Administration into these topics. The contract has been let and a preliminary report is scheduled for January 2004.

## Concern About Foreign Students

The House hearing also exhibited calls from a number of members, including Chairman Walsh, to consider the problem of too many foreign students coming to America. The concern was that these students attend our universities and graduate schools where they receive training in subjects like high energy physics. They then return to their countries and use that knowledge to do America harm. There was also a sense that these foreign students were depriving American students of places in graduate schools to study science and engineering. The members expressed their appreciation that NSF graduate fellowships were becoming more attractive as stipends have risen, up to \$30,000 in the proposed FY 2004 budget, and that these fellowships are open only to American citizens.

Bond, Mikulski, Walsh, and Mollohan all agreed that NSF needs more funds than the small increase in the proposed budget. Whether they will be able to deliver depends on larger issues of available discretionary funding, competing interests in the Subcommittee such as veterans’ care, housing, the environment, and NASA, and how large a deficit Congress is willing to tolerate. Both Subcommittees hope to move the process forward with markups in May (Senate) and June (House).

## AHRQ DIRECTOR TESTIFIES AT HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS HEARING

On April 3, Carolyn Clancy, Director of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education, chaired by Rep. Ralph Regula (R-OH). Accompanied by Robert Graham, Acting Deputy Director of AHRQ, Clancy presented the President’s FY 2004 budget request of \$279 million for her Agency, whose mission is to support, conduct, and disseminate research to improve the quality of healthcare.

Clancy believes that “we [AHRQ] will fulfill this mission by supporting research and through partnerships with physicians, nurses, and a variety of health care organizations, to assure that the findings of our research are translated into practice.” Although the FY 2004 budget for AHRQ is less than the FY 2003 level, Clancy asserted that the current request will nonetheless enable the Agency to focus on three priority issues: 1) translating research into practice, 2) promoting the use of information technology in hospitals to improve quality and patient safety, and 3) enhancing two databases to improve reporting on quality and disparities. (See *Update*, March 3, 2003).

**Correction:** An article in our March 17 issue, *NAS Holds Joint Session of 2000 and 2010 Census Panels*, incorrectly characterized a question asked by Janet Norwood. The query, directed to Census Bureau official John Long, regarded the use of revised estimates in population controls for surveys done by the Federal government, not intercensal estimates. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.



## NIH DIRECTOR (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Echoing his remarks at a National Press Club event, Zerhouni discussed the health benefits that have resulted from the investment in NIH. These benefits include: a “major reduction” in coronary heart disease mortality, declines in Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C infections, and the ability to screen for HIV infection. (See *Update*, March 17, 2003).

In the instance of coronary heart disease, Zerhouni enumerated the NIH discoveries that contributed to this reduction, highlighting that the first step was identification by NIH of “cardiovascular risk factors and the importance of behavior modification, such as smoking cessation, dietary changes, and exercise, to reduce risk and improve cardiovascular health.” With regards to HIV, he noted that “research on behavioral interventions to prevent HIV infection and improve its treatment also contributed to better control of the disease in our country.”

### **‘New Challenges and Strategies’**

Zerhouni also reemphasized that “due in part to research advances” the burden of disease is shifting away from “more acute and lethal forms of disease to chronic illness.” As a result of “prolonged survival and aging of the population,” the incidence of chronic and long-term diseases is increasing.

He also explained that “rapid changes in our environment and lifestyle lead to disequilibrium between our genetic make-up and our ability to adapt to these changes.” The “most dramatic recent example,” Zerhouni stressed, is the rise of the incidence of obesity, “due in part to the greatly increased availability of food and reduced daily physical energy requirement.”

### **NIH Roadmap**

Accordingly, the change in the “landscape of disease” requires an adoption of new approaches and an acceleration of the pace of discoveries, noted Zerhouni. “The NIH must simultaneously learn from the past, act in the present, and plan for the future.”

To facilitate this need, Zerhouni noted that soon after he arrived at the NIH, he convened a series of meetings to develop a “Roadmap,” designed to develop a short list of the “most compelling initiatives” that the NIH should pursue that would have the biggest impact.

He highlighted the three themes that emerged from the meetings: 1) Uncover new pathways to scientific discovery; 2) The need for integrated teams of specialists from numerous disciplines that were considered unrelated in the past; and 3) Re-engineering of the national clinical research enterprise “for optimal translation of discoveries into clinical reality.”

The list for what is needed to reengineer clinical research is long, noted Zerhouni. It includes supporting multidisciplinary clinical research training career paths, introducing new innovations in trial design, stimulating translational research, and developing large clinical research networks.

Zerhouni also emphasized the need for NIH to communicate its research results to the lay public and health professionals.

Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) informed the Director that she is pleased to see that the NIH is focusing on the re-engineering of clinical research. Roybal-Allard noted there are 2 million uninsured individuals in Los Angeles (one-third of those are in her district) and that she is often asked what the money going into research means to them.

Responding, Zerhouni assured the Congresswoman that her concern is that of NIH. If we don’t pay attention to translation, the discoveries will be made but the benefits not realized. The way we do clinical research and convey information has changed. Previously this research was done at large hospitals compared to the current trend of treating people in outpatient settings. The clinical research system has not adapted to that change, he asserted.

As another example of why such a re-engineering is needed, Zerhouni cited where the multicenters supported by the National Cancer Institute and the network supported by the National Institute on Allergy and Infectious Disease are unable to communicate with each other. He noted the need for standards.

Noting the United States’ fragmented health care system, Zerhouni explained that progress cannot be made without a more efficient way of accruing and transferring information. Rep. Roger Wicker (R-MS) inquired of the progress being made by the Jackson (Mississippi) Heart Study jointly sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD).

The NIH Director responded by noting that it is critical that NIH look at all areas of the country when it comes to research. Many health issues are dissimilar from region to region and we still have a persistent difference in health status. There is a need for research institutions in the areas where the disparities are occurring. Zerhouni indicated that he wanted a first hand look at the challenges. He also wanted to congratulate the NHLBI and NCMHD for launching the study. It is quite a comprehensive prototype, he noted, that will also examine the issue of diabetes and obesity, both with very significant payoffs in terms of public health.

Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID), a dentist, inquired of the NIH's support for oral health research into the use of salvia as a means of early detection for many diseases. Zerhouni responded by noting that the National Institute for Dental and Craniofacial Research received discretionary money from the NIH Office of the Director to fund research in this area. Furthermore, the NIH is making oral health a part of good health, said the Director. Many do not appreciate the impact of oral health on total health.

Simpson also noted his interest in diabetes research. Diabetes research is a major investment by the NIH, responded Zerhouni. He then asked National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) Director Allen Spiegel to elaborate on what the Institute is doing in this area. Spiegel highlighted the NIDDK's Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) and his decision to halt the clinical trial early because of the results. Spiegel emphasized that the DPP included an intensive lifestyle intervention and outperformed the drug arm of the trial in preventing the onset of Type 2 diabetes. Spiegel also noted that his Institute is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Secretary Thompson on the "Small Steps, Big Rewards" program which emphasizes that a small lifestyle change is sufficient. (See *Update*, March 18, 2002).

Noting that the newest technology does not get down to the patient, Rep. Don Sherwood (R-PA) informed Zerhouni of his delight to hear his thoughts on the delivery of scientific breakthroughs. Sherwood explained that his district consists of a largely rural and aging population. Zerhouni noted that almost all of the NIH Institutes and Centers have a component focused on rural health and that the NIH's budget for rural health has grown from \$90 million in 1998 to \$169 million. He also explained that with health disparities in rural areas there is an information gap that occurs.

Further, the return on investment is not the same. The question, says Zerhouni, is how we break that information gap.

## SCIENCE PANEL EXAMINES SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF NANOTECHNOLOGY

Citing that great American philosopher Yogi Berra's notion about how difficult it is to make predictions, especially about the future, House Science Committee Chairman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) opened a hearing into the social and ethical implications of nanotechnology.

Nanotechnology, as Christine Peterson of the Foresight Institute explained to the panel, has near-term aspects – technology significantly smaller than microtechnology, such as nanoparticles. Nanotechnology also encompasses the ability to enable broad control at the level of individual atoms to create large structures with fundamentally-new molecular organization. Proponents of nanotechnology, such as witness Ray Kurzweil, founder and CEO of Kurzweil Technologies, asserted it will "bring us the opportunity to overcome age-old problems including pollution, poverty, disease, and aging," as well as "completing the reverse engineering of the human brain to reveal the software design of human intelligence."

The Federal government has a multi-agency nanoscience and engineering initiative to sponsor research into developing these technologies with requested funding in FY 2004 of \$849 million. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is the lead agency for this initiative.

Boehlert and Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) have introduced legislation to codify the initiative. Responding to a National Academy of Sciences report and an NSF-sponsored workshop, their legislation (H. R.766) includes provisions that "establish a research program to identify societal and ethical concerns related to nanotechnology, and ensuring that the results of such research are widely disseminated...and integrating, insofar as possible, research on societal and ethical concerns with nanotechnology research and development." Unlike the human genome research initiative there is no specified set-aside for social and ethical research. Vicki Colvin, director of the Center for Biological and Environmental Nanotechnology at Rice University, argued that the Congress should "invest 5% of the total [nanotechnology] research dollars in societal, ethical, and environmental impact studies."

The legislation also includes provisions for an Advisory Committee “to provide advice and information on nanotechnology research, development, demonstration, education, technology transfer, commercial application, and societal and ethical concerns.” Langdon Winner, Professor of Political Science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, told the Science Committee that any such advisory body should include members of the general public. He went further and recommended the establishment of citizen panels to examine important societal issues about nanotechnology. He suggested that the panels “would study relevant documents, hear expert testimony from those doing the research, listen to arguments about technical applications and consequences presented by various sides, deliberate on their findings, and write reports offering policy advice.” As the witnesses and some members of the Committee pointed out, such consultation with the public and social scientists in advance may have prevented the difficulties faced by those who have promoted the use of genetically-modified food products.

In recent years, Bill Joy, chief scientist for Sun Microsystems in *Wired Magazine*, and novelist Michael Crichton in his recent book *Prey*, have raised the specter of the negative consequences of this technology that in Joy’s words is “threatening to make humans an endangered species.” Members of the science panel generally rejected this view and expressed support for nanotechnology research. They also mostly expressed the view that it was important to fund research in the societal and ethical questions that are raised by pushing the frontiers of knowledge one more time with unknown consequences. The Committee expects to mark up the bill on April 30.

## **SCHOLAR TESTIFIES AT HOUSE HEARING ON FEDERAL ORGANIZATION AUTHORITY**

On April 3, the House Government Reform Committee held a hearing on Presidential Reorganization Authority. Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) called the hearing in an effort to prevent a repeat of the lengthy debate that occurred last year as Congress shaped the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In his opening statement, Davis noted that “given our current organizational structure, it is exceeding difficult for Congress to undertake even the simplest reorganization of the Executive Branch.”

Executive Reorganization Authority was first enacted in 1932 at the behest of President Herbert Hoover. It existed intermittently in varied forms until 1984 when it lapsed during the Reagan Administration. No significant push had been made to reinstate it since then until President Bush called for its renewal in his FY 2003 budget proposal. The Authority essentially allows the President to submit Executive Branch reorganization proposals to Congress, which must then vote them up or down within a set period of time. No amendments to the proposals are allowed. This system is similar to “fast-track” Trade Promotion Authority, which was granted to President Bush last year in a close vote.

Testimony at the hearing focused on two issues: 1) the history and limits of the Authority; and 2) the impact it would have on civil servants. Paul Light, of New York University and the Brookings Institution, addressed the first topic by listing several restrictions Congress should place on the Authority based on its past provisions, including:

- Limit the Authority to the incumbent President. It should not be a permanent, institutional power.
- Congress should reserve a substantial role for itself in considering reorganization. This could take the form of a legislative veto or review.
- The Authority should be limited in scope. In the past, Congress has prohibited the use of reorganization plans to create or overhaul Cabinet-level departments.
- Congress should use legislative measures to provide direction to those overseeing Federal reorganizations.

The controversial political issue regarding the Reorganization Authority relates to the effect it will have on civil servants. When Bush first called on Congress to create the DHS last year, he insisted on having flexibility to arrange the Department’s personnel. This controversial measure was opposed by labor groups and congressional Democrats and caused a lengthy standoff between the Senate and the Administration. Now that granting Bush the Reorganization Authority is under consideration, Federal employee groups are urging caution.

Mark Roth, General Counsel of the American Federation of Government Employees, and Colleen Kelley, President of the National Treasury Employees Union, appeared at the hearing to express their concern that the Authority could allow Bush to propose reorganizations plans that would weaken the rights of civil servants. Kelley also mentioned her concern



regarding the Administration's recent efforts to scale back the Federal work force through competitive sourcing of jobs. This would allow private sector companies to compete with Federal workers for certain designated positions. (See *Update*, February 10, 2003).

It's unclear how the debate over granting the President the Reorganization Authority will play out. Davis seems likely to introduce a bill on the subject in the coming weeks, but he made it clear that he will not undercut Federal employees in his proposal. He represents a district in suburban Washington that is home to a large number of civil servants.

## SENATE HELP COMMITTEE FOCUSES ON THE TEACHING OF HISTORY

On April 10, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a hearing on the teaching of American history and civics at the K-12 level. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) chaired the hearing in place of the panel's Chairman, Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH).

David McCullough, prominent historian and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novels Truman and John Adams, appeared as a witness and bemoaned the lack of historical knowledge among present-day students, even going so far as to call it a crisis. He posited that some teachers may be afraid to discuss certain history topics with their classes because of the controversy that can arise – such as Thomas Jefferson's affair with Sally Hemings – but exhorted teachers not to be afraid of controversy. McCullough also recommended the use of historical site visits as a teaching tool, noting that places of interest are located in almost every part of the nation.

Alexander used the hearing to introduce S. 504, the "American History and Civics Education Act of 2003." The bill, which also has been introduced in the House as H.R. 1078, would establish American history and civics academies for teachers and students as well as launch a national alliance for teachers of these subjects. The academies and alliance would be funded through grants awarded by the Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to nonprofit educational institutions. Bruce Cole, the current Chairman of the NEH, noted in his testimony that the program would complement several existing programs run by the Endowment, including the *We the People* initiative (see *Update*, March 4, 2003).

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, attended to watch McCullough's testimony then gave remarks of his own

about the importance of teaching history in schools. Byrd mentioned the "Teaching American History Grant Program" he championed at the Department of Education and urged that the programs in S. 504 be structured in a way that they complement these existing grants.

## NCVHS CHAIR EXPRESSES CONCERNS TO THOMPSON

In a February 28 letter to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson, John R. Lumpkin, Chair of the National Committee on Vital and Health Statistics (NCVHS), asserted that there is "a threat to the backbone of our nation's health statistics system." On behalf of the Committee, Lumpkin also expressed concern that "the President's FY 2004 budget does not adequately support [the] important effort" of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) "to provide essential data on the nation's health and healthcare."

The President's budget sets back efforts "to build a strong, technologically sophisticated health information infrastructure," the Committee observed. The FY 2004 budget "moves in the wrong direction. It will undermine the viability of NCHS core programs and slow efforts to build more technologically sophisticated systems."

Two areas are of particular concern to the NCVHS Chair, include:

- 1) There is an unacceptable trade off between essential long-term investments and, in the short run, continuation of efforts to collect sufficient data on high priority topics through the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). "This survey, a cornerstone of our nation's health statistics system, produces important national information on health behaviors, insurance, access to care, and racial and ethnic disparities. It also serves as the national benchmark for more targeted surveys in states and the private sector, and for integrated survey efforts across HHS." According to Lumpkin, a reduction in the sample size of NHIS "will frustrate efforts to monitor the health of minorities, the disadvantaged, and the disabled."
- 2) NCHS has not been given the necessary resources for investments in technology development or assisting states with implementation of a web-based technology platform designed to provide quicker and higher quality data. The budget for NCHS also proposes significant reductions in information technology funding at a time when the

Center "is taking positive, overdue steps to invest in the technology of its data systems."

The additional resources needed to help NCHS maintain its programs and advance its information technology closer to the cutting edge are small in comparison to our public and private investment in health, but will greatly facilitate addressing our most pressing information, concluded the letter.

## **'GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSIONS OF TERRORISM' RELEASED**

In March, *The Geographical Dimensions of Terrorism* was released. The book, which was edited by Susan L. Cutter, the University of South Carolina and COSSA Board member, Douglas B. Richardson, Executive Director of the Association of American Geographers, and Thomas J. Wilbanks, Oak Ridge National Laboratories, was funded in part by the National Science Foundation (NSF). Philip Rubin, NSF Director of the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences Division, wrote the introduction, in which he noted that the volume is part of a national research agenda funded through an expedited NSF review process.

In addition to the research agenda and book, the undertaking also produced a workshop and brochure. Richardson discussed the project at an April 24, 2002 Decade of Behavior briefing on the human response to disaster. (See *Update*, April 29, 2002). The book may be ordered at <http://www.routledge.com>.

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## **RESEARCH! AMERICA HOLDS FORUM ON HEALTH RESEARCH**

"Prevention at the level of individuals is very cost-effective," observed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Deputy Director for Science and Public Health David Fleming, participating in a Research!America forum, *Leaders in Research and Technology Face the Nation: Aiming for Quantum Leaps in Medical and Health Research*. Responding to the question, what change is essential in the structure and financing of health care that addresses individual care, Fleming emphasized that there is a need to "invest upstream in prevention." It would be one way to lessen the illness care burden, he explained.

"Major research questions need to be answered," said Fleming. Notwithstanding the promise that new drugs and vaccines have, he observed that there are already vaccines available for influenza and pneumonia and significantly less than 100 percent of Americans get the recommended vaccinations. In addition to multidisciplinary research to develop new drugs, we need a cadre of multidisciplinary researchers to translate the research, Fleming continued. Potentially, the chief "unmet promise" is the translation of research, "the end approach to get the research to the people," Fleming stressed. We need to "bring in the social and behavioral folks" who can do the "research that allows us to make those translations steps happen as quickly and economically as possible," he asserted.

## **Psychological Consequences of Terrorism: Research Needed**

Responding to a question regarding the impact of September 11 on scientific research, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Elias Zerhouni stressed that the psychological consequences of terrorism should be included in biodefense research. He noted that "we are not as well prepared as we should be" in this area. He indicated that the NIH is following the timetable proposed by the National Academies Report. (See *Update*, July 8, 2002).

Zerhouni also called attention to the need for multidisciplinary research. The systems of target, he explained, are a lot more difficult to understand by yourself. "You need a team," he emphasized and observed that he sees "tremendous hope in "molecular prevention, the sequence of events that leads to a molecular disease." Progress will not be made otherwise, said the NIH Director.

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