



COSSA

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CONGRESS RETURNS FOR SHORT SESSION: CR, LAME DUCK AND OMNIBUS LOOM

After a month off for the Senate and five weeks for the House, members of the 109th Congress returned to Washington in early September. Leaders of both Houses have expressed a desire to recess on September 29th for campaigning and then have members return after the election on November 13th for a lame duck session to complete their work. The results of what looks like a very competitive contest for partisan control of both Houses could have a significant impact on that session.

In the meantime, with the start of fiscal year 2007 on October 1, 2006 and none of the spending bills ready for the President's signature any time soon (the Senate has passed only one of the 11 bills, another for Defense should pass soon), once again Congress will need to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund government agencies beyond October 1. There is hope that the FY 2007 Defense, Homeland Security, and Military Construction/Veterans' Affairs spending bills could pass as separate legislation before the start of the fiscal year, but funding for most domestic programs would come under the CR, which is expected to last until at least November 13.

What happens after that is mere speculation at this point. One scenario sees the combining of the FY 2007 spending bills in a massive Omnibus Appropriations bill that gets enacted during the lame duck session. In recent years, when the Omnibus bill device has been employed it is usually accompanied by some across-the-board reduction in the appropriations for government agencies, sometimes up to one percent.

If these reductions occur, the question is what is the base? Will informal conferences between House and Senate staff provide FY 2007 figures, even though some bills like the one that funds Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education programs, with so far essentially flat funding for the National Institutes of Health, may not reach the floor of either House.

Another scenario, which would cause great consternation for the National Science Foundation (NSF), would simply extend FY 2006 funding levels into FY 2007 with a year-long Continuing Resolution. The NSF would then lose the significant boost given to it by the House (eight percent) and the Senate Appropriations Committee (7.4 percent). This would also mean the Administration's American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI) would fall by the wayside.

Other Legislation

Legislation related to American competitiveness, introduced with great fanfare earlier in the year, to implement the recommendations of the *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report, remains stuck as Senators try to agree on an approach that satisfies a skeptical White House (see UPDATE [January 30, 2006](#)). The Administration sees little need for all the proposed new programs in Math and Science Education. In fact, it is undertaking a major review of existing programs for the FY 2008 budget the President will introduce in February 2007. At the moment, the Administration prefers to boost funding for those programs that already exist at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education.

Congress is still trying to get a handle on earmarks, those specific spending projects members of Congress deem worthy of funding, with various reform proposals still floating around. The House expects to take up rule changes the week of September 11 to require more transparency in the earmarking process by identifying the source of the specified spending. These new rules would apply to spending, authorizing, and tax bills. The call for full lobbying reform motivated by the Jack Abramoff scandal seems to have abated and those proposals will probably not get enacted.

Instead, the Senate has passed a bill, co-sponsored by Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK), a major opponent of earmarks, and Barack Obama (D-IL) to create a centralized federal database of information on more than \$1 trillion in federal grants, contracts, spending earmarks, and loans. The legislation directs the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to ensure the existence and operation of a single updated searchable database website accessible by the public at no cost, that includes for each entity receiving federal funding: (1) the amount of federal funds received in each of the last 10 fiscal years; (2) an itemized breakdown of each transaction; (3) the entity's location and primary location of performance; and (4) a unique identifier for the entity and its parent entity. The House will take up the Senate bill the week of September 11.

SBE DEPUTY NAMED 'ACTING' HEAD OF NSF'S EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

The National Science Foundation (NSF) announced that Wanda Ward, currently Deputy Director of the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences directorate (SBE), has been named Acting Director of the Education and Human Resources Director (EHR). Ward replaces Donald Thompson, who also served as Acting Director, but has now returned to Case Western Reserve University. EHR has not had a regular head since Judith Ramaley's departure in December 2004.

Ward has been with NSF for over 14 years, where she has served in a number of science and engineering policy, planning, and program capacities. For 14 months she was SBE's Acting

Assistant Director filling in between Norman Bradburn's departure and David Lightfoot's arrival. COSSA saluted her stewardship of SBE during the June 2005 reception welcoming Lightfoot and David Abrams, head of NIH's Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research.

Ward has helped lead the development of several NSF-wide activities, including the Human and Social Dynamics priority area, the Science of Learning Centers program, Cyberinfrastructure and the Social Sciences, and ADVANCE, a cross-cutting program to increase the participation and advancement of women in the sciences and engineering. Ward has also been active in broadening participation of underrepresented groups, helping launch a program to create strategic, regional alliances among the top 25 institutions graduating underrepresented minorities at the B.S. and Ph.D. levels. She has also served on the President's National Science and Technology Council subcommittees and interagency working groups in the areas of science education, workforce development, and the SBE sciences.

Prior to joining NSF, Ward was an associate professor of psychology and founding director of the Center for Research on Multi-Ethnic Education at the University of Oklahoma. She has a B.A. in psychology from Princeton and a Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford.

Nesbit Named New Head of NSF Legislative and Public Affairs Office

Also at NSF, Jeff Nesbit has been named head of the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs. Nesbit a senior communications strategist with 25 years of experience working in the national media, Congress, the Food and Drug Administration, the White House and Private Industry, replaces Curt Suplee, who remains at NSF as a senior adviser.

Nesbit, who began his new job in mid-June, has managed a successful strategic communications consulting business for more than a decade. His clients and projects have included dozens of national non-profit, trade associations, media companies, Fortune 500 companies, major health foundations, public relations agencies and advocacy organizations such as the Discovery Health Channel, the American Heart Association, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the American Red Cross, Porter-Novelli, CTIA-the Wireless Association, the Koop-Kessler Committee on Tobacco Policy and Public Health, the Kaiser Family Foundation and a number of major pharmaceutical companies.

Prior to forming his own communications consulting business in 1992, Nesbit was the Director of Communications to former Vice President Dan Quayle at the White House; Associate Commissioner for Public Affairs at the Food and Drug Administration under David Kessler; a U.S. Senate press secretary; and a national journalist with media organizations such as Knight-Ridder Newspapers.

Former SBE Division Director to Head National Academies Behavioral, Cognitive and Sensory Sciences Board

Philip Rubin, who led NSF's SBE Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences from 2000 to 2003, has been named Chair of the National Academies' Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences. The Board seeks to provide analyses and judgments from this scientific community on areas of public policy, set agendas for further research in these areas, and anticipate new policy issues emerging from research in these sciences. Christine Hartel is the Board's Staff Director.

Rubin is currently Chief Executive Officer and senior scientist at Haskins Laboratories in New Haven, Connecticut. Haskins is an independent research institute affiliated with Yale University and the University of Connecticut whose primary research focus is on the science of the spoken and written word. Rubin also holds an adjunct professorship in the Department of

Surgery and Otolaryngology at Yale Medical School and is a research affiliate in the Department of Psychology at Yale University.

During his tenure in Washington, Rubin also served as the chair of the National Science and Technology Council's Committee on Science's Human Subjects Research Subcommittee and helped produce an interagency report on counterterrorism and the social sciences.

Rubin holds a B.S. from Brandeis and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut.

MOVING BEYOND THE NATURE/NURTURE DEBATE

While acknowledging the "great strides" made over the past century in reducing the rates of disease and enhancing people's general health, a newly released Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Genes, Behavior, and the Social Environment: Moving Beyond the Nature/Nurture Debate*, emphasizes that "a number of far-reaching changes are required if significant strides are to be made in the future." Asked to identify gaps in the knowledge and any barriers that hamper the integration of social, behavioral, and genetic research, in addition to identifying a number of "well-described gene-environment interactions," the IOM's Committee on Assessing Interactions Among Social, Behavioral, and Genetic Factors in Health reviewed the state of the science in researching such interactions. It also made recommendations and listed priorities, including research, the workforce, resource, and infrastructural needs.

The study, commissioned by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, in conjunction with the National Human Genome Research Institute and the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, examined the state of the science on gene-environment interactions that affect human health, with a focus on the social environment. The goal of the study was to identify approaches and strategies to strengthen the integration of social, behavioral, and genetic research, and to consider the relevant training and infrastructure needs.

Chaired by Dan G. Blazer, Duke University Medical School, the Committee emphasized that "[u]nderstanding the association between health and interactions among social, behavioral, and genetic factors requires research that embraces the systems view and includes an examination of the interactive pathways through which these fields operate to affect health." Such research requires the participation of scientific investigators from a variety of different fields and a shift in focus from efforts that are dominated by single disciplines "to research that involves collaborative participation of scientists with various expertise at all stages of the research process."

Recommendations

The report's 14 recommendations address the issues of: transdisciplinary research, modeling strategies, use of animal models, research design and analysis, infrastructure, and ethical, legal, and social implications. They are:

1. **Conduct Transdisciplinary, Collaborative Research.** The NIH should develop Requests for Applications (RFAs) to study the impact on health of interactions among social, behavioral, and genetic factors and their interactive pathways (i.e., physiological).
2. **Measure Key Variables Over the Life Course and Within the Context of Culture.** NIH should develop RFAs for studies of interactions that incorporate measurement, over

the life course and within the context of culture, of key variables in the important domains of social, behavioral, and genetic factors.

3. **Develop and Implement New Modeling Strategies, to build more comprehensive, predictive models of etiologically heterogeneous disease.** NIH should emphasize research aimed at developing and implementing such models (e.g., pattern recognition, multivariate statistics, and systems-oriented approaches) for incorporating social, behavioral, and genetic factors and their interactive pathways in testable models within populations, clinical settings, or animal studies.
4. **Investigate Biological Signatures.** Researchers should use genomic, transcriptomic, proteomic, metabolomic, and other high dimensional molecular approaches to discover new constellations of genetic factors, biomarkers, and mediating systems through which interactions with social environment and behavior influence health.
5. **Conduct Research in Diverse Groups and Settings.** NIH should encourage research on the impact of interactions among social, behavioral, and genetic factors and their interactive pathways on health that emphasizes diversity in groups and settings. NIH should also support efforts to ensure that the findings of such research is validated by replication in independent studies, translated to patient-oriented research, conducted and applied in the context of public health, and used to design preventive and therapeutic approaches.
6. **Use Animal Models to Study Gene-Social Environment Interaction.** NIH should develop RFAs that use carefully selected animal models for research on the impact on the impact of interactions among social, behavioral, and genetic factors and their interactive pathways.
7. **Advance the Science of Study of Interactions.** Researchers should base testing for interaction on a conceptual framework rather than simply the testing of a statistical model, and they must specify the scale (e.g., additive or multiplicative) used to evaluate whether or not interactions are present. NIH should develop RFAs for research on developing study designs that are efficient at testing interactions, including variation in interactions over time and development.
8. **Expand and Enhance Training for Transdisciplinary Researchers.** NIH should use existing and modified training tools both to reach the next generation of researchers and to enhance the training of current researchers. Approaches include individual fellowships and senior fellowships, transdisciplinary institutional grants, and short courses.
9. **Enhance Existing and Develop New Datasets.** NIH should support datasets that can be used by investigators to address complex levels of social, behavioral, and genetic variables and their interactive pathways. This should include enhancement of existing datasets that already provide many, but not all of the needed measures and the encouragement of their use. NIH should also develop new datasets that address specific topics that have high potential for showing genetic contribution, social variability, and behavioral contributions - topics such as obesity, diabetes, and smoking.
10. **Create Incentives to Foster Transdisciplinary Research.** NIH and universities should explore ways to create incentives for the kinds of team science needed to support transdisciplinary research.

11. **Communicate with Policymakers and the Public.** Researchers should 1) be mindful of public and policymakers' concerns; 2) develop mechanisms to involve and inform these constituencies; 3) avoid overstating their scientific findings; and 4) give careful consideration to the appropriate level of community involvement and the level of community oversight needed for such studies.
12. **Expand the Research Focus.** NIH should develop RFAs for research that elucidates how best to encourage people to engage in health -promoting behaviors that are informed by a greater understanding of these interactions; how best to effectively communicate research results to the public and other stakeholders; and how best to inform research participants about the nature of the investigation (gene-environment interactions) and the uses of data following the study.
13. **Establish Data-Sharing Policies that Ensure Privacy.** Institutional Review Boards and investigators should establish policies regarding the collection, sharing, and use of data that include information about: 1) whether and to what extent data will be shared; 2) the level of security to be provided by all members of the research team as well as the research and administrative process; 3) the use of state-of-the-art security for collected data; 4) the use of formal criteria for identifying the circumstances under which individual research results will be revealed; and 5) how before sharing data with others, recipients must agree to use data in ways that are consistent with those agreed to by the research participants.
14. **Improve Informed Consent Process.** Researchers should ensure that informed consent includes the following: 1) descriptions of the individual and social risks and benefits of the research; 2) the identification of which individual results participants will and will not receive; 3) the definition of the procedural protections that will be provided, including access policies and scientific oversight; and 4) specific security, privacy, and confidentiality protections to protect the data and samples of research participants.

Concluding that the study of health outcomes has been driven primarily by disciplines that focus upon their own unique areas of expertise, the Committee underscores that “[h]ealth outcomes are multi-determined and result from complex interactions of many factors over time.” Accordingly, advancing the study of health outcomes will require investigators “to break out of these disciplinary ‘silos’ and attack the determinants of health in concert.”

For more information see: <http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3740/24591/36574/36577.aspx>

SUBCOMMITTEE QUESTION ACCURACY OF INTERCENSAL POPULATION ESTIMATES

Every year since 2002, the city of Washington, D.C. has disputed the United States Census Bureau's intercensal population estimates, and according to testimony presented to the House Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census, chaired by Rep. Michael Turner (R-OH), on September 6, it is not alone. In fact, it was reported that a total of 91 cities, counties, and states have challenged the Bureau's estimates since the year 2000. Historically, questions surrounding the accuracy of the intercensal estimates have been largely associated with its methodology and the ability to effectively collaborate with states and other entities.

"It is not that simple." Charles Kincannon, U.S. Census Bureau Director, told the Subcommittee. "Population estimates are the result of a cooperative effort; we rely on information from other federal agencies, as well as the states to produce the one set of consistent official intercensal estimates of population intended to serve all customers," he testified.

Graduating from simple linear projections used in the early part of the twentieth century, the Bureau has moved to more contemporary methods, aimed to present timely data and reduce inaccuracies. The estimates produced by one of two methods, *administrative records* or *distributive housing units*, are still resulting in questionable numbers.

Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), who serves on the full committee, attended the hearing and honed in on the miscalculations of the District's population estimates. In a recent [Washington Post](#) article, the Bureau acknowledged that they had missed about six percent of the District's population. Norton emphasized the impact inaccurate estimates could have on the city, indicating that the food stamp program and others that help poor people risk being under funded, leaving those who rely on such programs in a vulnerable state.

A panel of expert witnesses offered suggestions for improving population estimates. Warren A. Brown from Cornell University's Institute for Social and Economic Research testified that the Census already has a number of programs in place to improve the quality of its estimates, such as the Federal State Cooperative for Population Estimates (FSCPE). The FSCPE which promotes cooperation and information sharing to produce a set of consistent population estimates for every state, county and a place in the U.S, established its partnership with the Bureau in 1967. According to Director Kincannon, "The relationship is alive and thriving today."

At a July 2006 conference the Bureau sought suggestions on how to improve the estimates. Participants agreed that the 'one-size-fits-all approach' limits flexibility and needs further exploring. Kincannon emphasized that the Bureau remains motivated to make improvements that will fine tune its population estimates.

WOMEN AND YOUTH MAJORITY AMONG INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

Women are half of all international migrants, but their rights and concerns are largely ignored, according to a report released earlier this month by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, the 2006 State of World Population report entitled *A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration*, stresses that migration can be a win-win situation, but only if women's rights, health, and needs are addressed.

At a UNFPA sponsored briefing held in Washington, DC on September 7, panelists examined the scope and breadth of female migration, the impact of the funds they send home to support families and communities, and their vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation and abuse. According to UNFPA senior researcher and lead author of the new report Maria Jose Alcala, women who migrate experience double discrimination, as migrants and as women. "Women, especially those who are low-skilled or undocumented, are subject to violence, sexual exploitation, poor working conditions and low pay, and suffer from poor reproductive health," says Alcala.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) expressed her concern about the human and sex trafficking that accompanies migration. Maloney, a long time supporter of women's and human rights issues,

stressed that trafficking is not just a problem in other countries. "Each year, men, women, and children from all over the world are brought into the United States for the sole purpose of being bought and sold by American citizens for commercial sex," she noted.

Women and human rights advocates have pressured Congress for many years to further examine migrant issues. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 requires the State Department to produce an annual report that reviews recent trends in human trafficking and places countries on a four-tier scale based on their commitment to anti-trafficking policies. The June 2006 annual report estimated that 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year, most of them women and children.

The issue of women migrants has been low on the international policy agenda. For the first time government representatives from around the globe will soon attend a United Nations session specifically devoted to migration. The 2006 High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development offers a critical opportunity to ensure that the voices of migrant women are heard. For additional information on women and international migration as well as other population issues, visit the UNFPA website at www.UNFPA.org.

NIH SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSED POLICY

The NIH is seeking comments regarding a proposed policy for NIH supported or conducted Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS). GWAS is currently defined as any study of genetic variation across the human genome that is designed to identify genetic associations with observable traits or the presence or absence of a disease or condition.

Consistent with both the NIH mission to improve public health through research and its longstanding legislative mandate to make available to the public the results of the research activities that it supports and conducts, the NIH believes that the full value of GWAS to the public can be realized only if the genotype and phenotype datasets are made available as rapidly as possible to a wide range of scientific investigators.

The proposed policy reflects and extends existing NIH policies (e.g., the 2003 data sharing policy) and follows up on a May 15, 2006 notice to initiate a public consultation process to inform policy development activities.

Inquiries will be accepted at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guid/rfi_files/NOT-OD-06-094_rfi_add.htm or GWAS@nih.gov. Comments are due by October 31st and can be mailed to NIH GWAS RFI Comments, National Institutes of Health, Office of Extramural Research, 6705 Rockledge Drive, Room 350, Bethesda, MD 20892-8963. For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-06-094.html>

UPDATE RESUMES/COSSA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

COSSA Washington Update is a biweekly newsletter that focuses on federal policies and debates relevant to social and behavioral scientists, provides information on sources of federal support for research, and tracks the administration's funding requests for federal agencies. With the return of Congress from its summer recess, Update also resumes.

Upon our resumption, we are pleased to announce two new constituents to our membership roster, the University of Tennessee and the University of California at Irvine. We look forward to working with them both on the vital issues facing the social and behavioral scientific community.

To subscribe to Update or to learn more about COSSA membership email us at cosssa@cosssa.org. You can also visit us on the web at www.cosssa.org.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (**COSSA**) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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