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CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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Uncertain

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## ELECTION RESULTS IN: FUTURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE SUPPORT UNCERTAIN

The landslide re-election victory of President Reagan may pose some troubling questions for the fate of social and behavioral science research budgets during the second term. The President told the nation on election night that "You ain't seen nothing yet." Since his major campaign promise was to continue what he set out to do in 1981, it appears that budget cuts are in store for non-defense discretionary items.

In 1981, the President's first budget asked for 75% reductions in the social and behavioral science budget at the National Science Foundation (NSF) and deep cuts in other social and behavioral science research programs in other agencies of the government. Congress, after hearing from COSSA and social scientists, refused such large cuts. Since 1981 the budgets for most social and behavioral science research have been increased: modestly at NSF; substantially at the National Institutes of Health (NIH); not at all in some of the mission agencies. The administration maintains that the NSF programs are being "rebuilt". (See Presidential Science Advisor George Keyworth's comments, Update, October 26, 1984.)

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Dell H. Hymes, *President*

David Jenness, *Executive Director*

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Yet the President tells us that he still wants to cut federal spending to reduce the \$175 billion deficit. He has promised not to cut Social Security or Medicare and to continue increased spending for defense. That leaves about \$200 billion in non-defense discretionary spending in the budget which can be cut. Thus, social and behavioral science research may again be a prime candidate for budget reductions.

The results of the Senate and House races indicate that with the strong support of social and behavioral scientists, Congress may be able to resist significant cuts again. The situation in the Senate has changed very little. New Democratic Senators Tom Harkin (IA), Al Gore (TN) and Paul Simon (IL) are friends of the social and behavioral sciences. The committee chairman situation in the Senate is in a state of flux until the selection in late November of the new Republican leader and the decision of Jesse Helms (NC) on whether he wishes to switch from Agriculture committee chairman to Foreign Relations committee chair. The loss of Walter Huddleston (KY) will mean a new ranking Democratic member of the appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over the HUD and NSF budgets.

In the House of Representatives it appears that the Republicans did not pick up enough seats to re-establish the coalition of conservative Republicans and Democrats that controlled the House in 1981. Two long-time supporters on the Science and Technology Committee, Don Fuqua (FL) and Doug Walgren (PA), will remain as chairman of the full Committee and the Science, Research and Technology Subcommittee, respectively. Those friends of the social and behavioral sciences on the Committee thought to be in electoral trouble have survived -- George Brown (CA), Robert Young (MO), Harold Volkmer (MO), Stan Lundine (NY), Dick Durbin (IL), and Harry Reid (NV). The retirement of Larry Winn (KS) means that Manual Lujan (NM) will be the new ranking Republican on this committee. The Science and Technology committee has attracted many freshmen members in the past and should do so again.

With the death of Carl Perkins (KY), the retirement of John Erlenborn (IL), the move to the Senate of Paul Simon (IL), and the defeat of Ike Andrews (NC), the House Education and Labor Committee will undergo a significant transformation. Rep. Augustus Hawkins (CA) has been the committee chairman since Mr. Perkins' death. It appears that William Ford (MI) will re-gain the chairmanship of the Postsecondary Education Subcommittee, which will be responsible for reauthorizing the Higher Education Act in 1985. The replacement for Andrews as chairman of the Human Resources Subcommittee is unclear. This subcommittee has oversight responsibility for research programs at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Juvenile Justice program.

Shifts in committee memberships and freshmen assignments will occur after the party organizational meetings in late November and early December.

COSSA COMMENTS ON EDUCATION REGULATIONS

COSSA, in conjunction with a number of educational, professional, and research organizations, has commented in two letters to the Education Department (ED) on its new regulations on Student Rights in Research, Experimental Activities and Testing which implement the 1978 Hatch amendment. (See "Education Regulations May Impede Research," COSSA Washington Update, September 28, 1984.)

The final regulations, published in the Federal Register on September 6, 1984, request comments only on the definitions of "psychiatric or psychological examination or test" and "psychiatric or psychological treatment." Any program or project involving these activities will require parental consent. Currently, "psychiatric or psychological examination or test" is defined as "a method of obtaining information, including a group activity, that is not directly related to academic instruction and that is designed to elicit information about attitudes, habits, traits, opinions, beliefs, or feelings." "Psychiatric or psychological treatment" is defined as "an activity involving the planned, systematic use of methods or techniques that are not directly related to academic instruction and that is designed to affect behavioral, emotional, or attitudinal characteristics of an individual or group."

Researchers are particularly concerned that these definitions too casually use professional scientific terms and can be applied broadly to activities which are not legitimate psychiatric or psychological examinations, tests, or treatment. A letter which COSSA, the American Psychological Association, the Association for the Advancement of Psychology, the American Educational Research Association, and the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences sent to the Department proposes the following substitute definitions:

Psychiatric or psychological examination or test refers to one class of a larger body of psychiatric or psychological tests that obtains information not related to academic instruction or performance, and that is designed to obtain information about attitudes, habits, traits, opinions, beliefs, or feelings.

Psychiatric or psychological treatment refers to one class of a larger body of psychiatric or psychological methods or techniques that is not related to academic instruction or performance and that is not medically or psychologically necessary to the health of the student, and that is designed to address behavioral, emotional or attitudinal attributes of an individual or group.

With regard to educational research, the letter expressed concern that broad definitions of the terms will restrict research in such areas as improvement of teaching methods,

knowledge of how students learn, and effectiveness of curricula. The letter also states that "[t]he regulations place unnecessary prohibitions on local and state school officials in using educational research to improve the quality of education." In addition, the letter addressed the relationship between these regulations and regulations of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that cover research involving human participants. Researchers funded by HHS who use human participants in their studies must have their projects approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, most educational research is considered low-risk and is therefore exempt from the IRB regulations. In order to preserve this exemption, the letter asks that the Student Rights in Research, Experimental Activities and Testing regulations include a statement saying that "these regulations are not intended to supersede already existing policy established by the Department of Health and Human Services for the protection of human participants in research."

Both this letter and a letter signed by COSSA and 20 other organizations ask that implementation of the regulations be suspended pending further study. The second letter, sent to Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell, requests a meeting to clarify definitions of terms such as "primary purpose" of psychological examination, testing, or treatment, "new or unproven teaching method or technique," and classroom activities that are "not directly related to academic instruction." This letter focuses on the expansion of the role of the federal government in determining school policy at the state and local levels encouraged by the regulations and their possible violation of the Department of Education Organization Act.

The regulations are scheduled to go into effect on November 15. Whether the Education Department incorporates the definitions supported by COSSA remains to be seen.

#### OMB CHIEF STATISTICIAN PREDICTS "TIGHT" BUDGET NEXT YEAR

Dorothy Tella, Chief Statistician in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), told the 35th annual meeting of the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) in Washington on November 2-3 that the coming budget season would be "tight" for federal statistical agencies thus, forcing important choices for the statistical user community. Ms. Tella favored improving the quality of data, even if it meant curtailing the frequency or sample sizes of surveys conducted by statistical agencies. She urged the Committee members to support this choice as well. The Committee on National Statistics was founded in 1972 at the National Academy of Sciences following a recommendation of the President's Commission on National Statistics.

While noting that OMB was legally responsible for evaluating the statistical needs of the country, Ms. Tella called for increased interaction between CNSTAT and OMB. She cited her two goals for the upcoming year: to develop long-

range plans for the improved performance of statistical programs and to devise appropriate mechanisms for public input into statistical decisions. To meet the first goal her office would focus on such items as planning alternative sample designs to reduce the burden on businesses, improving what she called the "spotty" quality of economic aggregate statistics, and giving greater guidance to agencies responsible for special data-gathering. To achieve the second goal Ms. Tella will conduct ongoing discussions with statistical users of the ways data are tabulated and published.

[Earlier this year the GAO published a study of the impact of budget cuts on statistical agencies which found that the nature of many of the studies was affected by decreased frequency or reduced sample size. (See Update, August 10, 1984.)]

Other sessions of the day-and-a-half meeting of the Committee considered reports on ongoing projects and suggestions for future studies. A CNSTAT report, entitled Sharing Research Data, will soon be available. The introduction to the report includes the following: "...many members of the scientific community are reluctant or unwilling to share their data even after publication of analyses of them...Cognizant of the often substantial costs to the original investigator for sharing data, the Committee seeks to foster attitudes and practices within the scientific community that encourage researchers to share data with others as much as feasible."

In addition, a Committee working group has recently held seminars bringing together survey researchers with cognitive scientists, to look again at the interactions between the ways in which questions are asked and the data that result. Much exciting work in recent years bears directly on cognitive and social presuppositions, subjective estimates of probabilities, and the structure of cognitive biases. Scholars involved in this effort are currently considering what steps to recommend for further investigation of this field. For further information on either of these projects, contact Miron L. Straf, Research Director, Committee on National Statistics (202/334-3096).

Reporting on current plans and concerns, staff members of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the OMB, and the Census Bureau discussed issues in the redesign of the Current Population Survey -- for example, to what extent telephone surveys or proxy reporting are reliable. Other groups within government are studying the rather high non-response rate to data-gathering involving small businesses (as contrasted, for example, to rates from small farms); and issues having to do with occupational illness. Janet Norwood, Commissioner of Labor Statistics, pointed out that the BLS sponsors more than half of all household survey modules -- i.e., topical additions to the ongoing, monthly Current Population Survey conducted by the Census Bureau.

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BRITISH TO STUDY POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain has funded a study of political participation in that country. Noting that while General Elections excite high levels of electoral participation, only 32.4 percent of the electorate turned out for the European Parliamentary elections. The study seeks to look at who takes part in politics and for what reason.

Using the studies of participation in the United States by Lester Milbraith, Sidney Verba and Norman Nie as their starting points, Professors Geraint Parry and George Moyser of the Department of Government at the University of Manchester want to discover the kinds of political activities the British people undertake. They are particularly interested in "direct action" participation such as demonstrations, boycotts, and political violence. They are concerned that for some in Britain the distinction between commitment to Parliamentary politics and street politics may now be blurred. The study will be conducted primarily by means of a national sample survey of about 2,000 citizens in England, Wales and Scotland and a more concentrated survey of six contrasting local communities with in-depth interviews of the general public and elites.

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SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:  
AGING RESEARCH IN THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION (VA)

This is the fourth in a series of occasional articles which will examine intramural social and behavioral science research programs in federal departments and agencies.

The Research and Development Program in the Department of Medicine and Surgery of the Veterans Administration (VA) supports intramural research conducted by investigators on the staffs of VA medical centers across the country. The VA, which emphasizes the health and social needs of aging veterans, conducts research on the biological, clinical and psychosocial aspects of aging. Research on the development of innovative health care delivery systems is also a priority.

FY 1983 funding for investigators who reported aging as their primary program area was \$3.2 million; for those reporting aging as their secondary program area, funding was \$6.6 million. Approximately 30% of Research and Development projects in FY 1983 involved social or behavioral science research. Social and behavioral science research projects cover relationships between aging and topics such as nutrition, sleep, stress, alcoholism, learning and memory, coping skills, and health status. Research is also conducted on Alzheimer's disease and the effectiveness of health care provision.

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Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the next issue of the COSSA Washington Update will be published December 7, 1984.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information.

Minority Research Initiation Program

The Minority Research Initiation (MRI) program is part of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) overall effort to promote full utilization of all highly qualified scientists and engineers. The objects of the MRI are to encourage the establishment of independent research projects by minority scientists and engineers and to increase the participation of minority researchers in all programs of the Foundation. The MRI program accepts research proposals in all scientific and engineering disciplines supported by the Foundation. Proposals may be submitted to the MRI program by minority scientists who (a) hold full-time faculty or research-related positions at U.S. colleges or universities, and (b) have not previously received federal research support as faculty members.

FY 1985 Funds Available: \$2.5 million

Funding Mechanism: Grants

Review Process: Peer review

Disciplines Funded: Any area of science or engineering supported by the National Science Foundation.

Restrictions on Awards: Research initiation projects normally will be supported for a period up to three years and may be extended up to two additional years if warranted. There is no upper limit on the size of MRI grants; however, the size of awards will be consistent with the general level of NSF awards in the relevant disciplinary programs.

Deadlines: Proposals may be submitted at any time; however, early submission during the fiscal year (i.e. before January 1) is recommended. The review process normally takes six to nine months.

Contact: Dr. Roosevelt Calbert, Program Director  
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