
CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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CONGRESS RETURNS: GRH AND THE BUDGET AFTER THE SUPREME COURT

The 99th Congress returns from two weeks of participating in the patriotic fervor of 'America is back' and 'Liberty Weekend' to a crowded agenda with very little time left to complete it. The next district work period is scheduled for August 15 - September 8. Both houses hope to adjourn by the first week in October, leaving a full month for campaigning.

The first order of business will be to cope with the implications of the recent Supreme Court decision which voids the automatic deficit reduction (sequestration) procedure of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings (GRH) law. (The other provisions of GRH remain intact.) The Court declared the procedure unconstitutional because it gave the director of the General Accounting Office, a legislative officer, too much executive power. The easiest and most immediate task is to pass a joint resolution validating the FY 1986 cuts made in March. This is expected to occur without much opposition, although the potential for mischief on any legislative procedure is always a possibility.

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COSSA Washington Update is written and produced by the Consortium's staff: David Jenness, Howard J. Silver, John H. Hammer, Susan D. Quarles, and Katrina R. Styles.

The Consortium represents more than 185,000 American scientists across the full range of the social and behavioral sciences, functioning as a bridge between the research world and the Washington community.

The attempts to reduce the deficit in FY 1987 and in later years now becomes increasingly difficult. The Congress has agreed on a budget resolution for FY 1987 that it claims will reduce the deficit to \$142 billion, meeting the \$144 billion target required by GRH.* However, most observers believe this resolution includes faulty economic assumptions and budget reductions done with blue smoke and mirrors. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is now suggesting the projected deficit will be larger than originally anticipated. By mid-August when the 'snapshot' of the budget required by GRH is taken, a more realistic picture could emerge and the budget resolution will be blown out of the water, necessitating some fast political maneuvering by the Congress.

With automatic sequestration out the window owing to the Court, the Congress must now establish a joint congressional committee (expected to be the two budget committees) to make the necessary reductions to meet the budget targets. That Committee must bring forth a joint resolution which Congress must pass and the President must sign. The political maneuvering will occur when Members of Congress are faced with making reductions in popular programs two months before election day. Observers suggest Congress will find 'a better way.'

The appropriations process, where Congress will be forced to make the actual reductions, appears to be a victim of the time constraints Congress is working under. According to GRH, the House was supposed to pass their appropriations bills by June 30. Only one bill has made it through, the military construction bill because it had aid to the Contras attached to it. The others are at various stages of the process. Many Congress-watchers are predicting a Continuing Resolution at the end of September to keep the government going, with perhaps a lame-duck session after the elections. Another course of action, suggested by Rep. Dave Obey (D-WI) many years ago, would be to package all the appropriations bills in one omnibus bill that the House will pass in early September and send to the Senate for action, hoping for passage in that body by the end of September.

How does all this affect agencies and issues of concern to the social and behavioral science community? It clearly makes Yogi Berra's overused adage, "it ain't over til it's over," even more of an overused truism. It will also make for an interesting September, as Members of Congress try to solve their dilemma and still get out of town with enough time to explain it all to their constituents before judgment day. In the meantime, the regular legislative process continues. What follows is an attempt to bring Update readers up-to-date on where things stand.

National Science Foundation: By an overwhelming majority, the House of Representatives passed an authorization bill providing funding at the President's request and including an extra \$3 million for the social and behavioral sciences. The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has reported out its bill at the President's request and it too includes an extra \$3 million. The Senate Commerce Committee is expected to act on the Senate bill this week or next. Thus, it appears an authorization bill will emerge from this Congress with an extra \$3 million for social and behavioral science research.

The appropriations process may be quite different. The only discordant note in the debate on the NSF authorization bill in the House was an insert submitted by Rep. Edward Boland (D-MA), Chairman of the HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. Boland, whose Subcommittee is responsible for funding the subsidized housing programs the administration wants to cut, said: "I want to put everyone here on notice, that I will not support additional cuts in that area to fully fund all of the wants and desires of every other agency in the bill." The suspicion is that the 13% increase for NSF will not remain after the appropriations' process in the House, with a markup expected within two weeks. Over in the Senate, the process is stalled as Sen. Jake Garn (R-UT), Chairman of the HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, continues hearings on NASA.

Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education: The House Labor, HHS, ED Appropriations Subcommittee chaired by Rep. William Natcher (D-KY) has completed its markup. Details on specific agency funding are embargoed although rumors abound. The results of the markup, which include funding levels for the National Institutes of Health, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the Department of Education, should be available for the next issue of Update.

*Note: In the last issue of Update we reported that the conference report on the budget resolution included specific language supporting an increase of \$150 million for the National Science Foundation (NSF). This apparently did not happen, it getting lost somewhere between staff agreement and the printing of the report. COSSA has been assured that the resolution assumes this increase, at least in the minds of the staff responsible for the Science function of the budget. This should give the appropriations committees more leeway in their deliberations on the NSF funding level.

COSSA WELCOMES TWO NEW CONTRIBUTORS

COSSA is pleased to announce that the University of Virginia and the University of California-Irvine have recently joined the Consortium as Contributors. The Consortium now comprises the 10 founding Members, 30 Affiliates, and 46 Contributors.

ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING

A recent story in The Chronicle of Higher Education (issue of July 2) conveyed the notion that the new Minister for Research and Higher Education in the new Chirac government in France had assessed the quality of research in the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and had found social science research inferior to that in the natural sciences.

David Dickson, the writer of the Chronicle story who also reports on science news in Europe for Science and the (London) Times Higher Education Supplement, quoted the minister, Alain Devaquet, as saying that in the social sciences the best work "is close to the worst" in the natural sciences. That, Dickson implied, was one reason for the resignation a few weeks ago of the well-known anthropologist Maurice Godelier as head of social sciences at CNRS.

The story failed to give a specific citation for Devaquet's remarks, but in an interview that ran in the June 4th issue of Le Figaro, the 'establishment' newspaper in Paris, Devaquet was quoted by Figaro reporters as saying, with regard to the 'social and human sciences,' that at CNRS "le meilleur cotoie le pire." Dickson's rendition suggests that Devaquet believed the best social science research to be barely at the level -- whether slightly below or slightly above is unclear -- of the most meretricious of natural science research, which would be an interesting conception of the scala natura of intellectual endeavor.

However, in the Figaro interview, the minister in fact contrasted the general situation of the 'exact' sciences with that of the social and human sciences, taking into account two varieties: university research and CNRS research. In the case of the natural sciences, Devaquet commented that in recent years French research funding policy had favored CNRS over the universities, and that (therefore) university research in those fields suffered a certain "langour." (The French do generally have a word for it.)

By contrast, in the social sciences, Devaquet held that in CNRS "le meilleur cotoie le pire." (An idiomatic translation might be "the best rubs shoulders with the worst," or "is side by side with the worst.") Devaquet attributed that to a certain "balkanization" in the research structure of CNRS. In the universities, however, Devaquet held that social science research was conducted at a level of excellence that CNRS does not attain.

In short, the minister was simply saying that CNRS is not so good in the social sciences as are French universities; in the natural sciences, it is the other way round. That is a judgment that most foreign observers would endorse.

In his Chronicle story, Dickson commented that Godelier's resignation "came after" (post hoc ergo propter hoc?) the announcement that the new government intended to cut social science research at CNRS next year by 12 percent. He failed to point out that CNRS's budgets are being cut in most areas.

OMB SEEKS COMMENTS ON QUALITY OF ECONOMIC STATISTICS

The President's Economic Policy Council has established a Working Group on the Quality of Economic Statistics, cochaired by the Department of Commerce and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Working Group is to investigate the quality of economic statistics produced by the federal government and will submit a report to the Council at the end of the summer. The group is seeking public comment on the quality and usefulness of such statistics to aid in the preparation of its report.

Comments on these specific points are requested:

- 1) the usefulness to the public and private sectors of current federal statistical series, where current coverage is incomplete, and which series provide more detail than is needed;
- 2) the accuracy of economic indicators, the extent to which existing series reflect the concepts commonly used in economic analysis and provide useful estimates of these concepts;
- 3) the appropriateness of current series in terms of the tradeoff between timeliness and accuracy, the need for economic data immediately following the reference period, the level of detail appropriate to such early reports, the impact of revisions on the usefulness of the data, and identifying series that are released too late to be useful.

Comments must be received by August 8, 1986. Two copies should be send to the Working Group on the Quality of Economic Statistics, OMB, 3001 New Executive Office Building, Washington, DC 20503.

NIH STUDIES INCREASE IN COSTS OF RESEARCH GRANTS

Several months ago the central office administering the extramural research grants programs in the 11 agencies of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) made public an internal analysis of the growth of the average costs of research grants between FY 1980 and FY 1985.

In general, it was noted that the average costs of all forms of research grants rose 48% during that period -- faster than

inflation and with no apparent statistical relation to year-by-year changes in the inflation rate. By far the largest category of research grants in NIH is that for traditional research projects (ROls); here, the average cost rose 58%.

A major component of the increase has been an increase in indirect costs claimed by the receiving institutions. In the period in question, public institutions' indirect cost rates climbed faster than rates for private institutions, though the latter remained higher on the average. The study could not determine whether this meant that public institutions have been shifting certain costs to the direct costs budget line or whether private institutions have factored some costs into their overhead calculations. There is no evidence that institutions with relatively high indirect costs rates now receive more grants or more expensive grants than they used to. (This has been a subliminal hypothesis in some congressional quarters -- a version of the adage that 'the rich get richer' -- in recent discussions of 'controlling' grant costs or rebalancing access to public research funds.)

In direct costs budgets, personnel costs have accounted for the largest share of the increase. An interesting aspect of salary costs is that principal investigators are claiming slightly less of their salaries from grants, and a lesser share of non-doctorate research time (research assistants, et al.) is being assigned to grants. Compared to 1980, a larger share of the payroll now goes to research scientists with doctorates other than the principal investigator, e.g., the co-principal investigator and other higher-level professional personnel. Non-principal-investigators are spending a larger portion of their time on grants. There has been a faster increase in the grant-supported time of investigators with clinical degrees than of those with academic doctorates, and the former have higher salary rates.

Competitive ROls generally are budgeted for the entire grant period, typically three years. To be continued after the initial recommended period of support, they must compete directly with new applications. There is evidence from the NIH study that personnel costs and equipment costs rise sharply in the first year following the renewal, which would not be unreasonable since a successful renewal is awarded on the basis of already demonstrated achievement. Another trend that was noted was the faster increase in costs of grants involving human subjects.

In general, as is well known, the number of applications for NIH grants has risen sharply in recent years. The number of awards has also risen, but not so sharply. Thus, other things equal, grant proposals have to be more highly rated by study sections to receive funding. In the NIH study, proposed budgets for more highly rated grants have been cut less in the review-and-award process. A summary statement is that NIH is awarding more highly rated and more expensive grants.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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

Policy Research Program
(Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy)

The Policy Research Program provides support for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs and 21 other offices within the Department of Defense. Of interest are political, social, and economic research related to defense matters. Program emphasis is on Soviet policies and perceptions, strategic theory, regional issues, and the integration of defense planning with other aspects of national security policy, including arms control.

Recent topics funded by this program include Soviet policies in the Asia-Pacific region, the impact of U.S. policies on terrorist behavior, and an automated system for assessing the impact of technology transfer on Western security.

Budget: The budget for FY 1985 was approximately \$20 million, of which about one third went to unsolicited proposals.

Application/Review Process: Unsolicited proposals are welcome. Program staff encourage prospective applicants to submit brief concept papers explaining the study. Proposals are circulated to relevant offices within DOD for review. Depending on the nature of the study, security clearance may be necessary.

Disciplines Supported: Economics, political science, sociology, and others.

Funding Mechanisms: All research is funded by contract.

Contact: John P. Merrill, Director
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