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CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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**CONFEREES GIVE NSF UNEXPECTED INCREASE**

A House-Senate conference committee allocating National Science Foundation funds concluded work October 17, and emerged with a large and unexpected budget increase for the agency. In choosing between the House and Senate funding levels in each of five appropriations categories, the committee opted for the higher figure in every instance. Consequently, the conference report's total funding for FY 1990 exceeded the totals suggested by either the House or the Senate (see chart below).

Conferees agreed to appropriate \$2.104 billion, an 11.6 percent increase over FY 1989 funds. Although still \$45 million below the request, in these days of fiscal restraint this is an important signal about the priority of national investment in scientific research and education. The research and related activities account was allocated \$1.715 billion, an 8.3 percent increase over FY 1989. Science and Engineering Education received \$210 million, a 22.8 percent rise over last year. The new Facilities Modernization program received its first funds, \$20 million.

All these numbers are subject to change pending a proposed 1.43 percent across-the-board reduction to fund the anti-drug program (the conferees added 1 percent to the agreement reached previously). In addition, the entire bill may be jeopardized by a dispute over raising the cap on government-insured mortgages for single family homes.<<

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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.

Raymond E. Wolfinger, President

Howard J. Silver, Executive Director

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**NSF FY 1990 APPROPRIATIONS**  
(all figures are in millions)

<u>Activity</u>	<u>1989 Actual</u>	<u>1990 Request</u>	<u>1990 House</u>	<u>1990 Senate</u>	<u>1990 Conf</u>
Research & Rel.	1583	1803	1715	1685	1715
Sci. & Eng. Educ.	171	190	210	200	210
Antarctica	131	156	156	156	156
Facilities	0	0	0	20	20
Inspect. General	-	-	-	3	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1885</b>	<b>2149</b>	<b>2081</b>	<b>2064</b>	<b>2104</b>

Notes: 1. Inspector General rounded from \$2.6 million.  
 2. Research account does not include \$37.5 million appropriated in a FY 1989 supplemental bill for rebuilding radio telescope in West Virginia.  
 3. Antarctica includes \$82 million from Department of Defense appropriations.

**SEQUESTRATION IN FORCE, BUT FOR HOW LONG?**

On October 16 President Bush signed the order implementing across-the-board budget cuts required by the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction law (GRH). Sequestration was triggered when Congress failed to complete work on the budget reconciliation bill that would satisfy the GRH-imposed deficit targets for FY 1990.

Agency officials anticipate that the GRH reductions of about 5 percent for domestic agencies will not immediately affect most programs, and conventional wisdom is that House and Senate conferees will hammer out a reconciliation bill within the next month and void the sequestration. However, both House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL) and OMB Director Richard Darman have argued that the reductions should be permanent.

Coming up at the end of October, Congress must take action to raise the federal debt ceiling. Proposals to revise GRH and perhaps remove the social security trust fund surplus from deficit calculations are likely additions to such must-pass legislation. In addition, the current continuing resolution runs out October 25, and with President Bush threatening to veto a number of bills -- including the huge Labor, Health and Human Services, Education appropriations measure -- another stopgap bill is almost certain to be necessary. The budget season is far from over!<<

**GAO PAPERWORK STUDY REPORTS CHILLING EFFECT OF OMB**

Confirming the findings of a 1986 COSSA investigation, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported October 12 that the

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has effectively reduced the availability of some government-collected data. In a report released at an October 12 hearing before the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, GAO contended that OMB policies and practices regarding approval of data collection efforts have discouraged implementation of such efforts by some federal agencies. In its response to the GAO study, however, OMB suggested such a "chilling effect ... may not be undesirable."

Entitled "Paperwork Reduction: Mixed Effects on Agency Decision Processes and Data Availability," the GAO report was requested in October 1986 after the science committee learned of the results of a COSSA investigation of OMB information clearance procedures on the research agendas of federal agencies (see UPDATE October 17, 1986).

GAO confirmed COSSA's finding that OMB's approval procedures have discouraged agencies from initiating data collection efforts. "OMB's policies and practices," the report states, "appear to have been associated with a reduction in the availability of certain types of information -- sometimes referred to as a "chilling effect" -- for some agencies." This effect caused agencies to hesitate before proposing surveys or other data collections because of anticipated OMB disapproval. Although the GAO study is unclear about which agencies were "chilled," GAO's Assistant Comptroller General Eleanor Chelimsky, who presented the report, promised that she would provide specifics for the hearing's written record.

Although only 5 percent of the 20,000 information collection requests from 211 federal agencies were disapproved during the study's time frame (spanning from 1982 to 1987), "about 7 percent of the agencies had persistent difficulties in obtaining OMB approval." It appears that agencies conducting short-term data collections and agencies doing "developmental research built on a more open-ended exploratory methodology" were less likely to receive OMB approval.

Reasons for OMB disapproval of data-collections were most often "lack of practical utility" and "not necessary," two terms not fully defined either in the Paperwork Reduction Act, which governs OMB information clearance procedures, or by OMB clearance officers. The GAO study also found "inconsistent application of its [OMB's] policies by office staff," partially due to the inadequate technical training received by those reviewing the proposals. GAO noted that the time required for OMB review of agency submissions had increased from the early 1980s to 1987. In some cases, this increase was the result of efforts to comply with procedures initiated in 1986 that encourage public comment in the review process.

Among its recommendations, GAO suggested: 1) that OMB delegate to those agencies that have demonstrated internal review capability the primary responsibility for decisions about data collections with OMB providing periodic checks; 2) that OMB

help agencies with less effective internal mechanisms to improve the quality of their data collections through the more effective use of sampling procedures and better designed data collection instruments; 3) that OMB develop an ongoing training program for its paperwork review staff; and 4) that OMB review information collection requests concurrently with the public comment period for these requests. OMB concurred with all of these recommendations.

At the same Science Committee hearing, Fred Wood of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) presented a report entitled "Federal Scientific and Technical Information in an Electronic Age: Opportunities and Challenges." The report notes that the government does not have an overall strategy for the dissemination of scientific and technical information (STI), and contends that such a strategy is a national necessity "if the potential of new electronic technologies is to be fully realized, and if questions about access to Federal STI are to be resolved."

The report also makes clear that electronic technologies offer the only real hope for managing the already massive archive of scientific data and documents. But at the same time, these technologies aggravate conflicts between the basic need for the free flow of federal information and concerns that access to such information may threaten national security and international competitiveness. One recommendation of the report is to increase the coordinating role of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. Rep. George Brown (D-CA) noted the policy importance of the issue of information resource management and suggested that the overload of information "may overwhelm us if we don't deal with it more effectively."

In the meantime the reauthorization of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 continues to be the focus of many in the information management community. There are now three competing bills sponsored by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), chairman of the House Government Operations Committee, Rep. Frank Horton (R-NY), ranking Republican of the same committee, and Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Government Information and Regulation. Negotiations and persuasion activities continue in an attempt to find a solution to what may be a philosophical impasse between those who believe that paperwork reduction should be the primary focus of a government information management policy and those who believe that such a policy must be more comprehensive and include statistical policy, information dissemination, and records management. Stay tuned!<<

#### FATE OF NICHD SURVEY OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR RESTS WITH HHS

The conference committee on the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education appropriations bill did not resolve differences between House and Senate report language concerning the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) proposed National Survey of Health and Sexual Behavior. The survey, which various scientific and medical groups consider

vital to the fight against AIDS, has been the source of controversy throughout 1989.

The House appropriations committee stated in its report that spending funds to conduct the survey "does not appear to be an appropriate use of public funds ... The Public Health Service is directed not to proceed with this study." The Senate report, by contrast, noted that "the Committee is awaiting the results of the pilot study that has already been funded." An attempt to provide compromise language that would allow the pilot to proceed was rejected by the House committee, chaired by Rep. William Natcher (D-KY).

Faced with conflicting advice from the appropriations committees, HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan and Assistant Secretary for Health James Mason must now decide whether or not to go ahead with the pilot. Although Mason has indicated in print that he would like to see the survey conducted, it is unclear whether the department would challenge the views of its long-time appropriations arbiter, Rep. Natcher.

In a development that may be helpful to the survey's prospects, Dr. Antonia Novello, Deputy Director of NICHD, has been nominated to be the Surgeon General of the United States. Press reports indicate Novello has strongly supported the survey.<<

#### NATIONAL STATISTICS COMMITTEE ENDORSES SIPP

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is making a "vital contribution to understanding the characteristics and dynamics of the population at economic risk," according to the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT). In an interim report jointly requested by the Census Bureau and the Office of Management and Budget, CNSTAT concludes that SIPP offers unique and important data on American economic well-being.

CNSTAT contends that SIPP has two central goals. First, the survey is intended to provide information needed to study the status and dynamics of program participation, eligibility, and their concomitants (including transition rates and gross flows over time). Second, the survey is designed to provide improved information on the income distribution of the population.

In its 92-page report, CNSTAT offers hearty praise for the survey. "SIPP," the committee states, "provides data not elsewhere available that is integral to policy analysis of income maintenance programs. It has strengthened, and gives promise of further strengthening, information on the distribution of household income." The survey, CNSTAT adds, is providing both cross-sectional and longitudinal data "broadly applicable" to analysis of economic well-being. Future improvements promise to make the survey increasingly useful.

While noting that SIPP has endured numerous "growing pains" (including delays in the release of survey results), CNSTAT strongly endorses the survey and advocates continued funding. The committee also calls for a restoration of the SIPP sample size to its original 20,000 households. Budget considerations in the years since SIPP's inception have reduced the sample size to about 12,000 households.

#### NEW RESEARCH NEEDED TO BOOST WORKFORCE QUALITY

Enhancing the quality of America's workforce will require a host of major changes in education, workplace conditions, child care programs, and human resource research. That's the message of a recent report by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency that utilizes contributions from social scientists to describe the reforms necessary to protect American competitiveness. COSSA board member Isabel Sawhill served as a member of the commission.

Noting "the paucity of information on many important issues" related to workforce quality, the report calls for a package of research efforts to fill the gaps. Among its specific recommendations is an increase in Bureau of Labor Statistics funding, with new resources to be used for quick-turnaround household surveys and the support of longitudinal databases and pilot studies of new databases. The commission also advocates increased funding for the Departments of Labor and Education to be used for evaluations of human resource programs, studies of the labor market status of disadvantaged individuals, and the collection of information on best employment practices.

"Vast numbers of American students cannot meet the educational requirements of today's workplace, much less those of the next century," the report declares. To ward off a decline in American competitiveness, the nation needs presidential leadership in the development of national education goals and timetables, as well as increased business cooperation with schools to help students understand the educational requirements of the labor market. The committee also calls on employers to bolster their emphasis on academic performance in their evaluation of job applicants, thereby increasing the incentive for students to perform in school.

To help alleviate some of the tensions between work and family responsibilities, the commission advocates an increase in funding for child care expenses, as well as more flexible employment arrangements including "flextime" and part-time work.<<

#### UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA JOINS COSSA

COSSA is pleased to announce that the University of Georgia has joined the Consortium as a contributing institution.

**SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: BUREAU OF OCEANS AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply. More complete information is available in the August 8, 1989 Federal Register, page 32554.

**U.S. National Committee on Man and the Biosphere**

The mission of the United States Man and the Biosphere Program (U.S. MAB) is to foster harmonious relationships between humans and the biosphere through an international program of policy-relevant research which integrates social, physical, and biological sciences to address actual problems. Among the research activities included under the mission are catalytic conferences and meetings, education and training, and the establishment and use of biosphere reserves as research and monitoring sites.

Consideration is given only to proposals that are inter- or trans-disciplinary and concentrate upon at least one of the following: 1) biological diversity; 2) global climate and ecological change; or 3) sustainable/integrated development. In addition, preference is given to proposals which request \$50,000 or less, and which, if international, involve scientists from the host country. Proposals that deal with environmental policy issues, especially those relevant to agencies which support U.S. MAB, are also favored.

**Application Procedure:** Each proposal must first be submitted as a prospectus with a maximum length of two pages. Prospectuses must be accompanied by a two-page biographic sketch of the principal applicants and a cover sheet indicating how the proposal meets the program criteria. Authors of successful prospectuses will be invited to submit full proposals.

**Budget:** The committee expects total available funds to range from \$400,000 to \$500,000

**Funding Mechanism:** The committee will grant from eight to 10 awards, with most grants approximately \$50,000.

**Deadlines:** Prospectus: November 6, 1989  
Full proposal: May 1, 1990

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