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COSSA TESTIFIES TO HOUSE COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE PANEL

On April 24, COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver joined representatives from many scientific societies, including the American Psychological Association, in providing recommendations to the House Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Alan Mollohan (D-WV), regarding the Administration's proposed FY 2008 budgets for the agencies under the panel's jurisdiction.

Since COSSA covers support for the social and behavioral sciences across the federal government, Silver discussed the budgets for five agencies: the National Science Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

Having sat through numerous hearings during which witnesses made the case for increasing funding for the physical sciences and engineering, particularly at NSF, because they are the key disciplines to keep America competitive, Silver challenged this assertion in his testimony. Citing AAAS Chief Executive Officer Alan Leshner and former NSF Director Neal Lane, Silver made the case that American competitiveness requires support for **ALL** the sciences, including the social, behavioral, and economic sciences (SBE). In addition, he referenced Tom Friedman's "The World is Flat," and its argument that one of the consequences of the flattening is that individuals have more choices than ever before about where to work, where to live, and where to go to school. If Friedman is right, he told the Subcommittee, "understanding individual behavior should become a major scientific endeavor?"

With regard to NSF, Silver supported the Administration's significant increase to $6.43 billion. He discussed the increasing sophistication of tools available to conduct research in the SBE sciences and the key initiatives: the Science of Science and Innovation Policy and the ongoing Human and Social Dynamics priority. He also noted NSF's continued support for the three major surveys – the Panel Study on Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey, and the American National Election Studies. In arguing for increased support for SBE research, he indicated its vast portfolio from language learning to global climate change, with many other social, behavioral, and economic phenomena included as well.

Silver argued for the large increase proposed for the U.S. Census Bureau as it ramps up for the 2010 count. He asked the Subcommittee to guard the increase against attempts to raid it for other purposes, as was done on the House floor last year. Noting Census Bureau Director Louis Kincannon's statement that the 2010 short form should take less than ten minutes to fill out, Silver also supported continued full funding for the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS, a more timely data collection than the once-every-ten-years long-form, has allowed the Bureau to move to a short-form only Census in 2010.

The proposed increase for BEA includes funding for an initiative to measure investment in research and development and other knowledge-based activities in order to incorporate these measurements into the nation's GDP. Silver suggested this is something the Subcommittee appeared interested in during its earlier hearings and therefore deserved the panel's support.

In discussing the NIJ budget, Silver pointed to the influence of prior research on how we deal with crime, how police operations have changed, and how prisoner re-entry has moved to the forefront of the criminal justice system's concerns. He also indicated that the Subcommittee's expressed concern with the recent increases in crime after many years of a crime drop suggested a need for more research funding to ascertain why this was happening and why it was not uniform in places across this country.

With regard to BJS, Silver mentioned the difficulties faced by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) due to stagnant budgets. He also noted congressional interest in an ever-expanding list of criminal activity including cybercrime, stalking, and human trafficking without substantially increasing BJS' funding. This needs to change he told the panel.

Given that he discussed all this in six minutes led Chairman Mollohan to congratulate Silver for "covering a lot of material in a short period of time." Ranking Republican Rodney Freylinghuysen (R-NJ) thanked Silver for his testimony and for attending many of the Subcommittee's hearings.

For a copy of Silver's written testimony go to: www.cossa.org

NSF REAUTHORIZATION EMERGES FROM HOUSE PANEL, INCLUDED IN SENATE COMPETITIVENESS BILL

The reauthorization of the National Science Foundation (NSF) has moved quickly during the first few months of the 110th Congress. Spurred on by the National Academies' *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report, which sounded the alarm over America's impending decline, Congress has moved swiftly to enact legislation to keep the nation competitive.

In response, on April 25, the House Science and Technology Committee, chaired by Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), reported out H.R. 1867, *The National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2007,* a free standing bill that provides legislative justification for NSF's activities during the next three years.

The bill authorizes $21 billion for the National Science Foundation for FY 2008 – FY 2010. It would: put NSF on a ten year doubling path; establish a pilot program of one-year seed grants for new investigators to help improve funding rates for young investigators and stimulate higher-risk research; encourage NSF to foster relationships between academia and industry in order to spawn U.S. competitiveness; and increases funding for certain NSF education programs. The bill does not provide funding by directorates leaving those decisions to the NSF director. It would also increase the limits for spending on research instrumentation, encourage data sharing and study reporting, but without the mandates for open access required by other proposed legislation.

The bill will reach the House floor the week of April 3. The full House has already passed two other bills, H.R. 362 and H.R. 363, to create more K-12 science teachers through the use of financial incentives provided in the NSF's Robert Noyce Scholarship Program and to encourage undergraduates to study science and mathematics and increase funding for two post-graduate programs: the Faculty Early Career program and the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship program, which supports students in interdisciplinary fields.

Also on April 25 the Senate passed a very different version of the NSF reauthorization act. It was included as a part of the *America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act*, S. 761, which also creates 20 new programs in several federal agencies. The bill includes a provision for the Office of Science and Technology Policy to fund a National Academies' study of the "emerging management and learning discipline known as service science." This is defined as "curricula, training, and research programs that are designed to teach individuals to apply scientific, engineering, and management disciplines that integrate elements of computer science, operations research, industrial engineering, business strategy, management sciences, and social and legal sciences, in order to encourage innovation in how organizations create value for customers and shareholders that could not be achieved through such disciplines working in isolation."

The NSF provisions would double the Foundation's budget over the next five years. Although the legislation declares that the Senate wants NSF to emphasize the physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering, the crucial paragraph negotiated last year by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ): "Nothing in this section shall be construed to inhibit the grant selection process for funding other areas of research deemed by the National Science Foundation to be consistent with its mandate nor to change the core mission of the National Science Foundation" remains in the bill (see UPDATE, May 26, 2006).

The differences between the House free-standing NSF reauthorization and the multi-agency Senate bill create more than the usual difficulties for any conference committee to reconcile. The Senate bill would involve many different House committees, including Science and Technology for the NSF part and others.

In the meantime, the White House has indicated it is not too excited about much of this. They claimed in a statement that the Noyce program should not expand because it has not been evaluated and we don't know if it works. They also claim the Senate bill is too costly, creates too many new programs, and diverts resources from fundamental scientific research.

Of course, all of these bills are only authorizations. Actual funding is done by the appropriators and as we learned during the last five years, authorizations do not equal appropriations since the 2002 NSF legislation would have doubled the Foundation's budget by 2007, which has not occurred.

NIH CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW HOLDS OPEN HOUSE

On April 25, nearly 200 behavioral and social scientists gathered at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Center for Scientific Review (CSR) to attend its second of six *Open Houses* to provide feedback on the agency's peer review system. Welcoming participants, former NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) director and now current NIH Deputy Director Raynard Kington affirmed that the behavioral and social sciences (BSS) are an "important area of science" and a "central part" of the NIH's mission. As director of OBSSR, Kington proclaimed that he had been "thoroughly socialized." He also noted that as a former principal investigator and review committee member, he recognizes how important it is to science to refine and set priorities among increasing competing demands. Advancing research, however, is hard for all the areas of science that the NIH supports, Kington stated.

Maintaining that peer review is at the heart of heart of the agency, Kington acknowledged that serving on a NIH peer review group is a "non-trivial commitment of time and energy" and that the NIH does not "casually impose" on scientists' time. He expressed "awe" at the more than 30,000 scientists and public advisors that participate in the NIH's peer review process each year and whose input allows the agency to "fund the highest quality of science." According to Kington, the NIH supports more than 300,000 scientists at various stages in their research and who reside in more than 3,000 institutions across the U.S.

Sharing a nugget of peer review history, Kington informed the audience that Eleanor Darby was the first woman scientist to serve as executive secretary of the lone peer review panel in 1949. Frank Johnson, a U.S. Army pathologist, became the first African American to serve on a peer review panel in 1960.

Because science is constantly changing, the NIH must "periodically ask how we achieve our mission," he said. Accordingly, the peer review process has not been static over the last 50 years, originating in 1946 in room 301 in Building 1 on the NIH campus, he underscored. Over the years there have been many efforts to rethink peer review, Kington noted. In 1992, the research components of the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA) were returned to NIH. NIH was given five years to integrate these agencies. The CSR *Open Houses*, Kington explained, are designed to figure out if the previous reorganization by the CSR Panel on Scientific Boundaries for Review achieved its goal and whether additional changes are necessary. COSSA provided extensive comments on the 1998 reorganization efforts (http://www.cossa.org/boundaries.html).

Kington noted that since the five year doubling (1998 -2003) of the agency's budget, opportunities have never been greater and there have been equally comparable challenges. Consequently, peer review is experiencing difficulty in adapting to these challenges along with an "increased demand" on research. The NIH cannot achieve its goal without peer review, which is its fundamental structure, Kington insisted. The Open Houses are designed to assess how to realign the process and structure to do the best job, how we embrace BSS, now and in the future. The NIH "wants to hear your honest assessment," of what changes are needed for the peer review process. Kington concluded by noting that the agency "learns when we listen."

Kington's remarks echoed NIH director Elias Zerhouni's remarks at the March 26 meeting which addressed neuroscience. Zerhouni, like Kington, acknowledged the value of the BSS to the NIH and research. According to Zerhouni, assessment of the peer review system is a priority for this year because of the "acceleration and deceleration" of the NIH budget. As a result, managing the NIH research portfolio is "difficult" and "has affected peer review." Peer review is the "cornerstone of NIH." It is the mechanism that is "paramount to the success of NIH." He noted that the volume of applications the agency receives since the doubling has increased from 24,000 to 46,000. It has produced a scenario of decreased resources to deal with increased demand. He noted that many people believe that biomedicine has been well supported, but in order for science to advance support is needed across all areas of science.

CSR director Toni Scarpa explained that the meeting was not designed to "do a wholesale change of the process." He recognized, however, that some of the study sections were realigned better than others along with areas of new science that need consideration. According to Scarpa, CSR is taking a systematic review of every Integrated Review Group (IRG), a cluster of study sections around a general scientific area. CSR has committed to review each IRG every two years. The Open Houses, Scarpa explained, are a "unique opportunity" for scientists to tell the NIH what they think. In each case, the goal is to get the community's responses and input on two questions:

1. Is the science of your discipline, in its present state, appropriately evaluated within the current study section alignment?
2. What will be the most important questions and/or enabling technologies you see forthcoming within the science of your discipline in the next 10 years?

Below is a snapshot of the feedback from participants for the first question (**Is the science of your discipline, in its present state, appropriately evaluated within the current study section alignment?)**:

- There are areas of science that cut across general study sections domains that sometimes slip through the cracks. There are also underrepresented areas: neuropsychology, PNI, treatment science, and development. There is a need for continuous representation in social psychology, sociology, learning and cognition, anthropology, early development. Other Identified gaps in study sections expertise include: translation, dissemination, sustainability, neurobiological, systems, health informatics, eHealth, lifestyle issues, genomics, and international research.

- There is an issue of breadth vs. depth in study sections. Accordingly there is a need for reviewers well versed in multiple disciplinary research; study sections have not caught up with transdisciplinary emphasis (want experts but with appreciation for the broadness of the science)

- There is an apparent gap in review of new theories, tools, methodologies; clear need for interdisciplinary perspective. Advances in research and analytic methods are needed. Study sections are too often wedded to a single approach on design, breadth of expertise in varied research methodologies to evaluate cutting edge applications are needed.

- Behavior is complex and dynamic and changing any health-related behavior can be very challenging. The involvement of other disciplines is needed: economics, environmental science, architectural, law, and health policy have impacts on behavior.

Feedback on question two (**What will be the most important questions and/or enabling technologies you see forthcoming within the science of your discipline in the next 10 years?)** included:

- Genetics and behavior; genomics, personalized medicine; candidate genes; genes x environment interactions; phenotyping; and animal models;

- Computational models connecting behavioral science and neuroscience;

- Role of built-environment (e.g. effects of toxins on behavior and health);

- Emphasis on symptom management in addition to cure or prevention (aging, obesity, autism);

- Impact of non neurological physiology on behavior (e.g., infectious diseases and inflammation process;

- Measurement: dynamic sampling, automated measures, incorporation of biological variables, moving lab technology into field, early detection and intervention, use of consumer devices (GPS, PDAs) remote sensing, and virtual reality;

- Data management: mixed statistical methods and designs, database access, shared or large datasets, dissemination, informatics, archiving data, ethical implications of data collections;

- Translation: cost effectiveness of behavioral interventions, changing demography, functional significance of neurobiological findings (e.g., animal models and neuroimagining);

- Development of methods for merging and analyzing data from a variety of data sources
  - Integration of fine scale data and large scale population data
  - Developing and implementing data mining technology
  - Design of complex surveillance, intervention, longitudinal studies;

- Data sharing and its practical and ethical consequences (challenge of getting valid information from the population while maintaining confidentiality);

- Replication and validation studies are necessary;

- Technology: measures (biomarkers), electronic records, GIS, merged data, bioethics and human subjects, in vivo assessment of individuals, small assay analysis, communication, data collection, extant databases analyses;

- Methods: integrated data, community partnership, simulation and computational models;

- How can alternate methodologies be advanced and adopted more readily in social and behavioral sciences (e.g., contextually relevant approaches, community participatory research, real time analysis, mixed methods, ethnography?);

- How can new technology e.g., GIS, mixed methods to gather data on real world behavior in real time) be incorporated?

- How can we foster further scientific collaborations with relevant scientific discipline (e.g., economics, ethics, genomics, consumer health informatics, policy analyses, and political science?

CSR will post a summary of the meeting on its website at http://cms.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/Openhouses.htm.

SACHRP CONTINUES ITS EXAMINATION OF 'THE COMMON RULE'

On March 29 and 30th, the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Human Research Protection (SACHRP) held its first meeting of 2007. The Committee's charter requires that it hold no less than two meetings a year. The agenda included a continuation of SACHRP's examination of Subpart A, commonly referred to as the *Common Rule.*

In January 2005, SACHRP's then chair, Ernest Prentice, asked the Committee to review and assess all provisions of Subpart A of 45 CFR 46 and all relevant Office of Human Research Protection's (OHRP) documents, and develop recommendations for considerations by SACHRP in three categories: 1) interpretation of specific provisions in Subpart A, 2) development of new or modification to existing OHRP guidance, and 3) possible revisions to Subpart A.

Subpart A Subcommittee (SAS) co chairs, Dan Nelson, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Felix Gyi, Chesapeake Research Review, Inc., updated the Committee on SAS's activities since SACHRP's November 2006 meeting along presenting with new recommendations for the Committee's consideration. Invoking the theological question posed by Thomas Aquinas centuries ago, Nelson explained that a useful metaphor to describe the current state of affairs and what the Subcommittee views as increasingly happening in the institutional review board (IRB) world is "angels dancing on the heads of pins." Nelson related that the goals of SAS's work are to enhance protection of human subjects, to reduce regulatory burdens that do not contribute meaningfully to the protection of human subjects, and to promote scientifically and ethically valid research. He emphasized that the subcommittee "does not view these as exclusive or incompatible goals." According to Nelson, they are closely interwoven and mutually supportive of each other. He noted that SACHRP has received and reviewed all of the SAS's recommendations pertaining to continuing review and expedited review. Those recommendations have been transmitted to the Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt.

Since November, SAS has been looking at the issue of training and education, an issue that kept coming up in its deliberations so the subcommittee decided that it deserved special attention on its own. Accordingly, SAS decided that it would bring forth recommendations around the issue as a discrete category. Nelson related that the "need for training and education is implicit in regulatory requirements for IRB membership, if not explicit," i.e., *The IRB shall be sufficiently qualified through the experience and expertise of its members… to promote respect for its advice and counsel… In addition to possessing the professional competence necessary to review specific research activities, the IRB shall be able to ascertain the acceptability of proposed research in terms of institutional commitments and regulations, applicable law, and standards of professional conduct and practice…"*

This implicit requirement for training and education is also part of OHRP Terms of Assurance, Nelson pointed out. He also called attention to a more recent guidance document put out by OHRP; a set of frequently asked questions (FAQ). In particular, FAQ 1549 asks "Must investigators obtain training in the protection of human subjects?" He explained that the answer is "that HHS regulations for the protection of subjects do not require investigators to obtain training in this area; however, an institution holding an OHRP approved federal-wide assurance is responsible for ensuring that its investigators conducting HHS or HHS-supported human subjects' research understand and act in accordance with the requirements of the regulations."

SAS made four sets of recommendations aimed at four different target audiences, with slight differences in wording. After much discussion and amending of the recommendations to reflect the concern of the Committee, SAHCRP accepted the SAS's revised recommendations.

1. *SACHRP strongly recommends that OHRP require that institutions ensure that initial and continuing training is provided for IRB members. Such training should include ethical principles and their historical foundation, federal regulations, state and local laws, written IRB procedures, OHRP guidance, and institutional policies relevant to the protection of human subjects. Training should be initiated before members review human subjects research, and IRB duties should be commensurate with the level of training completed. Ongoing training should occur in a manner appropriate to assure the continued competence of IRB members.*

2. *SACHRP strongly recommends that OHRP require that institutions ensure that initial and continuing training is provided for IRB staff. Such training should include ethical principles and their historical foundation, federal regulations, state and local laws, written IRB procedures, OHRP guidance, and institutional policies*

relevant to the protection of human subjects. IRB duties should be commensurate with the level of training completed. Ongoing training should occur in a manner appropriate to assure the continued competence of IRB staff.

3. *SACHRP strongly recommends that OHRP require that institutions ensure initial and continuing training for the Institutional Signatory Official and the Human Protection Administrator (e.g., Human Subjects Administrator or Human Subjects Contact Person). Such training should include ethical principles and their historical foundation, federal regulations, state and local laws, and institutional policies relevant to the protection of human subjects, and the terms of the institution's federal assurance. Ongoing training should occur in a manner appropriate to assure the continued competence of these institutional officials.*

4. *SACHRP strongly recommends that OHRP require that institutions ensure initial and continuing training for investigators and other members of the research team with responsibility for conducting human subjects research. Such training should include ethical principles and their historical foundation, federal regulations, state and local laws, professional standards, and institutional policies relevant to the protection of human subjects. Initial training should be completed before investigators are allowed to conduct research that involves human subjects. Ongoing training should occur in a manner appropriate to assure the continued competence of investigators.*

Minimal Risk

Nelson explained that the understanding and the application of minimal risk has been deliberated among the subcommittee for a long time. SAS's goal, he stressed, has been to present an analytical framework for approaching this area of variable interpretations and confusion across the IRB and research community. Nelson noted that since its presentation to SACHRP in November, SAS has gone through many iterations of how it envisioned its final work product. Former SAS member David Strauss, New York State Psychiatric Institute, and now SACHRP member provided the Committee with background and a broader context along with some examples on the application of minimal risk definition as it exists in Subpart A of the regulations.

Strauss explained that "minimal risk means that the probability of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests." Calling it a "mind full" as well as a "mouth full," Straus stressed that it takes a lot to break it down and interpret it. He noted that in SAS's discussions, it seemed to him that the interpretation of the definition "led to a fair amount of confusion and uncertainty about what some of the terms mean, and how it can be applied." SAS recommendations, Straus explained, consisted of four introductory comments and six recommendations.

'Subpart A' Subcommittee (SAS) Recommendations Toward
an Analytical Framework for Understanding and Applying Minimal Risk

- Under Subpart A, the definition of "minimal risk" distinguishes research that is eligible for review using expedited procedures from research that requires review by the convened IRB.

- "Minimal Risk" also defines a threshold for other regulatory provisions, including waiver or alteration of the requirements for informed consent and its documentation.

- It is the consensus of the SAS that a careful and consistent application of the term "minimal risk" is central to the human subject protections provided under Subpart A.

- Inconsistency in the interpretation of minimal risk would weaken the protection afforded under Subpart A, or would contribute unnecessary requirements that do not serve the interests of human subject protection.

SAS recommends the following interpretation of "minimal risk" and
suggests that guidance be drafted in accordance with this interpretation:

- *The regulatory intent of minimal risk is to defined a threshold of anticipated or discomfort associated with the research that is "acceptably-low" or "low enough" to justify expedited review or wavier of consent.*

- *The IRB's evaluation of the harms and discomforts of the research should consider the nature of the study procedures, other study characteristics, subject characteristics, and steps taken to minimize risk.*

- *In its estimate of research-related risk, the IRB should carefully consider the characteristics of subjects to be enrolled in the research including an evaluation subject susceptibility, vulnerability, resilience and experience in relation to the anticipated harms and discomforts of research involvement.*

- *To satisfy the definition of minimal risk, the estimate of the anticipated harms and discomforts of research for the proposed study population may not be greater than an estimate of "the harms and discomforts ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine medical and psychological examinations or tests."*

- *While the harms and discomforts ordinarily encountered differ widely among individuals and individual populations, an ethically meaningful notion of "harms and discomforts ordinarily encountered" should reflect "background risks" that are familiar and part of the routine experience of life for "the average person" in the "general population." It should not be based on those ordinarily encountered in the daily lives of the proposed subjects of the research or any specific population.*

- *In summary, minimal risk should be applied in a manner that recognizes that risks are procedure-specific and population-dependent, but that the notion of "acceptably-low" risk is fixed. When the harms and discomforts of the proposed research as they are anticipated to impact the study participants are judged to fall below this acceptable-low risk threshold, the research is said to be "minimal risk."*

What's Next

The Subcommittee reported that the next topics selected for consideration are: informed consent (exemptions), and institutional responsibilities (assurances, engagement, multi-center research, including alternative models of review**).**

The full Committee also discussed issues impacting those with impaired decision-making capacity, conflict of interest among institutional review board (IRB) members, and investigator responsibilities/training and certification. SACHRP's next meeting is July 30 -31, 2007.

2010 CENSUS REENGINEERED: PREPARATION UNDERWAY AND ON SCHEDULE

The 2010 Census is estimated to cost $11.3 billion, making it the most expensive in the nation's history. Constitutionally-mandated, the decennial census produces crucial data used to apportion congressional seats, redraw congressional districts, and allocate billions of dollars in federal assistance. With less than three years to go, Congress continues to monitor its planning and implementation progress through a series of hearings.

Ken Prewitt, Columbia University Professor and former director to the Census Bureau, testified on April 24 before the House Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives on how the panel might effectively exercise its oversight of the preparation and execution of Census 2010.

Prewitt's recommendations largely focused on the public's participation to produce an accurate count. "The Census and the broad federal statistical system of which it is apart depend on a high level of public cooperation…there are no statistics without public cooperation." To ensure that the public participates at the highest possible level, Prewitt recommended fully explaining the purposes of the Census to the public to aid in producing the highest quality results feasible.

Also appearing before the Subcommittee was Karen K. Narasaki, President and Executive Director of the Asian American Justice Center. Narasaki noted that while the ideal for the Census is to achieve a complete count of all persons in the country, perfection in this context is impossible. "The pragmatic reality is the Census Bureau constantly strives to achieve the most accurate count possible and one that is better than counts achieved previously," she said.

Subcommittee Chairman William Lacy Clay (D-MO) expressed the urgency to resolve any outstanding issues or barriers that may prohibit an accurate 2010 count. "With the decennial survey less than three years away, the 2008 Dress Rehearsal rapidly approaching and preliminary testing of new technology, and procedures already underway in two cities, we are at a critical stage of preparations for the 2010." Jay Waite, Census Bureau Deputy Director responded that the 2010 Census is already underway. "In February, we sent informational letters to every local government throughout the country, outlining our plans for the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) Program." "This is an important operation, as well as an important partnership for the Census, and supports our key goal to improve the accuracy of the Census," Waite continued.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) detailed that the Census reengineering design shows progress, but managing technology acquisitions, temporary field staff, and gulf region enumeration requires attention. "Uncertainty surrounds a keystone to the reengineered Census, the mobile computing device (MCD)" testified Mathew J. Scire, GAO Director of Strategic Issues. The MCD allows the Bureau to automate operations and eliminate the need to print millions of papers questionnaires and maps used by Census workers to conduct Census operations and to assist in managing payroll. "The MCD, used in the 2004 and 2006 Census tests, was found to be unreliable. While a contractor has developed a new version of the MCD, the device will not be field tested until next month leaving little time to correct problems that might emerge during the 2008 Dress Rehearsal."

The Harris Corporation, awarded the MAF/TIGER (**M**aster **A**ddress **F**ile/**T**opologically **I**ntegrated **G**eographic **E**ncoding and **R**eferencing) contract in June of 2002, has successfully supported the Census Bureau in updating the digital mapping data utilizing GPS-location capabilities and automation tools to eliminate such inconstancies in 2010. To date, Harris has mapped 2,399 counties and is on-track to map an additional 638 counties into that database by 2008, in support of the Decennial Census.

Harris Corporation was also awarded the Field Data Collection Automation (FDCA) program in April 2006. Since the contract was awarded, Harris Corporation reports that to-date the FDCA system has performed well with no significant anomalies and that a highly-skilled team has been formed that is focused on successfully supporting the 2010 Decennial Census mission.

FINDINGS OF IN-DEPTH SURVEY OF MUSLIM COUNTRIES RELEASED

Since September 11, 2001, there have been many studies of Islamic groups, such al Qaeda, which oppose the United States and use violence against civilians. However, there has been relatively little research into how these groups are viewed by the larger Muslim society from which they arise.

With support from the START (Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) Consortium at the University of Maryland, World Public Opinion conducted an in-depth survey of four of the largest Muslim countries—Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Morocco—to examine in detail public attitudes on various topics ranging from democracy and globalization to the perceptions of US foreign policy goals. On April 24, Gary LaFree, University of Maryland Professor and Director of START, moderated a session that discussed the implications of the findings.

The surveys conducted between December 9, 2006 and February 9, 2007, utilized in-home interviews based upon multi-stage probability samples. Steven Krull, Director of Programs on International Policy Attitudes and WorldPublicOpinion.org Editor, presented the latest findings on Muslim public opinion about U.S. policy, attacks on civilians and al Qaeda. Key findings of the analysis of the general distribution of attitudes found that in all countries, large majorities have a negative view of the U.S. Government. "While U.S. leaders may frame the conflict as a war on terrorism, people in the Islamic world clearly perceive the U.S. as being at war with Islam," confirms Krull. Consistent with this concern, large majorities in all countries (average 74 percent support the goal of getting the U.S. to remove its bases and military forces from all Islamic countries ranging from 64 percent in Indonesia to 92 percent in Egypt, reported Krull.

According to the study in the area of U.S. foreign policy, very large majorities believe the U.S. seeks to undermine Islam and large majorities even believe that the U.S. wants to spread Christianity in the region. The study also revealed that views are mixed regarding U.S. support for the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. While Indonesians support the goal of getting the U.S. to stop providing such support, Moroccans and Pakistanis lean toward supporting it, and Egyptians are divided.

Consistent with the opposition to attacks on civilians in principle, and in contrast to the significant support for attacks on U.S. troops, majorities in all countries disapprove of attacks on Americans working for U.S. companies in Islamic countries. In all cases, the findings demonstrate that the Egyptians are the most opposed to attacks on Americans while the Pakistanis are the least.

Regarding views about al Qaeda and its goals, the study indicates that people tend to believe that others share their feelings toward Osama bin Laden and groups that attack Americans. However, those who have a favorable attitude are considerably more likely to project their attitudes than those who have negative attitudes. The study indicated that views of al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden are divided, with many expressing uncertainty. One reason found for these opinions is the widespread disbelief that al Qaeda committed the September 11 attacks.

Some audience members raised concerns about the validity of the study, questioning whether or not it was rigorous in design and methodology. The entire study includes questions on a wide-range of variables that may be related to the support for such anti-American groups. START expects to release an analysis of these variables at a future date. To view the detailed report visit www.WorldPublicOpinion.Org.

NCLB DROPS MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENTS

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) continued its No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization hearings on Tuesday, April 24, with a hearing on *NCLB and Middle and High School.* The panelists included: John Podesta, Center for American Progress; Robert Balfanz, Center for Social Organization of Schools, John Hopkins University; Bob Wise, Alliance for Excellent Education; Tony Habit, North Carolina New Schools Project; and Edna Varner, Hamilton County (TN) Public Education Foundation.

HELP Committee Chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA) opened the hearing with the statement "It's clear that secondary school students need as much attention and help in these essential courses as students in lower grades do. If we don't get into what is happening in the middle schools we will miss the basic goal of No Child Left Behind." The panelists all agreed that more needed to be done to assist students in the middle and high school to not only graduate on time, but also be college ready no matter their postsecondary path. Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) stated "We make a mistake when we tack up NCLB in the vacuum of K-8."

Forty years ago the US ranked first in the world in secondary school graduate rates, today it ranks 17th. Only about 78 percent of white high school students graduate on time, with the numbers even lower for minority students. Black students are graduating at an on time rate of 55 percent and Latinos at 52 percent. Ranking Member Mike Enzi (R-WY) stated that everyday 7,000 students drop out of school, and at the present graduation rate more than 12 million students will become dropouts within the next decade. According to a recent report by Teachers College at Columbia University, male high school graduates earn up to $322,000 more over the course of their lifetimes than dropouts, while college graduates earn up to $1.3 million more. The cost of these lost students to the economy is significant. If the class of 2006 dropouts had instead graduated on time they would have contributed an additional $309 billion in income earned to our nation's economy over their lifetimes. Sen. Enzi declared "We simply cannot afford to lose those resources," dropouts could be contributing to our economy.

According to Balfanz, about 15 percent or 2,000, of the nation's high schools produce close to half of its dropouts. He believes the federal government in partnership with states and local school districts need to lead the effort to transform the nation's low performing secondary schools. The Graduation Promise Act (GPA), introduced by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Burr, and Kennedy, is according to Podesta a necessary and vital step in the direction towards improving graduation rates. The GPA proposes a set of federal efforts to assist states in fighting high school attrition in three primary areas: more directly interrupting the dropout crisis in the worst performing schools; developing new strategies for improving graduation rates while maintaining academic standards; and investing more in proven methods for increasing graduation rates and supporting state policies in this area.

According to former West Virginia Governor Wise, federal government funding for Pre-K to 6th grade totals nearly $18 billion. Funding for postsecondary education is nearly $16 billion, without taking into account student loans or other tax incentives. However, funding for the 7th to the 12th grades amounts to only about $5 billion. Kennedy argued that federal investment at the middle and high school level is not sufficient. The main source of federal funds for schools comes through the Title I program. However, the Senator pointed out, that only eight percent of students who benefit from Title I funds are in our high schools. Ninety percent of the high schools with low graduation rates have a majority of low-income students, but only a quarter of those schools receive any Title I funding, he noted.

An increasingly important issue to the education community and to members of the Committee is education research and data collection. In Governor Wise's testimony he said "Educators and policy makers need accurate information about how students are doing in school." He testified that it is critical to develop high quality longitudinal data systems in order to improve student achievement and that the federal government must assist the states to build the data collection infrastructure. He called for NCLB to include $100 million in competitive grants to build those systems, and another $100 million in formula grants to every state to align those systems with district systems and build educator capacity at the state and local level to use the data to improve teaching and learning. Echoing the sentiment of the panelists and several committee members, Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA) said there is a need for the creation of a best practices' center that educators and districts could access via the web.

DBASSE BEGINS STUDY OF EVIDENCE IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

The National Academies Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (DBASSE) led by Michael Feuer has launched a major project to examine "Evidence for Use: Improving the Quality and Utility of Social Science Research."

DBASSE has appointed a new Standing Committee under the chairmanship of former Census Bureau Director and current Columbia Professor Ken Prewitt to give sustained attention to identifying actions aimed at promoting high quality social science with an eye toward evidence-informed decision making.

According to DBASSE, the Committee will initiate and host interdisciplinary activities designed to: build bridges between high quality research and the appropriate and realistic uses of research evidence to guide decision making; tackle the conceptual and practical issues in setting evidentiary standards for applied research; identify opportunities to improve professional training in applied behavioral and social science; foster partnerships with outside organizations concerned with related issues; and advance a culture of improved research, communication, diffusion, and understanding of opportunities and barriers for utilization of research in public policy.

The genesis for the panel is the increasing demand to justify policy with "sound science." In *No Child Left Behind* the phrase scientifically-based research is mentioned 111 times. The Campbell Collaboration has focused on meta-reviews of research to see if social policy interventions work in education, criminal justice, and other arenas. In this era of scarce public resources and increased demands for accountability of public funds, this "evidence-based" approach appeals to political decision-makers.

The Standing Committee held its first meeting on April 27 and 28. For further information about the new panel, including its list of members, please go to:
www7.nationalacademies.org/dbasse/Social_Science_Evidence_for_Use.html

SOLUTIONS TO HEALTH DISPARITIES SOUGHT

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), in collaboration with several NIH Institutes/Centers and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced its intention to issue two Program Announcements with Review (PARs) in early June 2007 and with an earliest start date in July 2008.

The announcements encourage behavioral and social science research on the causes and solutions to health disparities in the U. S. population. Health disparities between, on the one hand, racial/ethnic populations, lower socioeconomic classes, and rural residents and, on the other hand, the overall U.S. population are major public health concerns. Emphasis is placed on research in and among three broad areas of action: 1) public policy, 2) health care, and 3) disease/disability prevention. Particular attention will be given to reducing "health gaps" among groups. Proposals that utilize an interdisciplinary approach, investigate multiple levels of analysis, incorporate a life-course perspective, and/or employ innovative methods such as system science or community-based participatory research are particularly encouraged.

The announcements are a direct outgrowth of NIH's Health Disparities Research Plans and *the NIH Conference on Understanding and Reducing Health Disparities: The Contributions of the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, October 2006 (http://obssr.od.nih.gov/HealthDisparities/index.html). The announcements will remain active for three years with receipts in September of 2007, 2008, and 2009. For more information, contact: Ronald P. Abeles, Ph.D., Special Assistant to the Director, OBSSR, Office of the Director, National Institutes of Health, via telephone: 301.496.7859, fax: 301.435-8779 or E-mail: abeles@nih.gov.

AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECT: APPLICATIONS WANTED

The Health Improvement Institute (HII) is seeking applications for its *Award for Excellence in Human Research Protection.* Awards are given for demonstrated excellence in promoting the well-being of people who participate in research. Any institution or investigator who conducts research involving human beings, including medical and social science research, or who contributes to human research protection, is eligible to apply for an Award; self-nomination is acceptable. There is no fee for applying for an Award. New applications from previous Award winners are also welcome.

HII has established three annual Awards, and will announce the 2007 Award recipients in December 2007:

1. Best practice that has demonstrated benefit — given to a research institution, unit (for example, Institutional Review Board), or individual;
2. Innovation established through research or other report published in the last 5 years — given to an individual (or team) who produced a significant contribution to advancing human research protection; and
3. Life-time achievement — given to an individual (in academe, industry, or government).

HII launched the *Award for Excellence in Human Research Protection* in 2002 to encourage and to recognize excellence and innovation in human research protection. The Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services was the founding sponsor of the Awards program. Applications must be received at Health Improvement Institute on or before September 24, 2007. For more information, contact HII at 301-320-0965, or via email at hii@hii.org.

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