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COSSA Washington Update

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FY 2009 APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS TO RESUME; DOMESTIC SPENDING BILLS STILL UNLIKELY UNTIL NEXT YEAR

After suspending consideration of the FY 2009 appropriations bills for a month, House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. David Obey (D-WI) announced that the Military Construction and Veterans' Affairs spending bill will come to the House floor the week of July 28th. He also suggested that Congress would try and finish the Defense bill before adjourning for the year at the end of September. The House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee is scheduled to mark up the bill this week.

This would provide a vehicle for the Continuing Resolution (CR) that would fund all the FY 2009 domestic spending bills, which are not expected to reach completion by the end of the session. The CR could last into early next year. It would fund most, if not all, non-defense government programs at the FY 2008 levels. Some exceptions will occur, with the Census Bureau among the major candidates since the 2010 count must go forward, and therefore, the funds must be provided.

Early in the year the Democratic Congressional leadership made it quite clear they were not going to confront President Bush with spending bills that he would veto, as he did last year. This became exacerbated when the Congressional Budget Resolution included discretionary funding that exceeded the President's proposed number by \$24 billion. The

leadership's plan, at that point, was to have the spending bills go through Subcommittee and full Appropriations Committee markups and perhaps some floor consideration and then the process would stop.

The House began its markup process and the full Appropriations Committee succeeded in approving five bills. It appeared that the process was working smoothly. Then on June 26th with the large Labor, Health and Human Services, Education bill on the agenda, the Republicans tried to force a vote on the Interior bill to which they hoped to offer an amendment to end the twenty year moratorium on offshore drilling for oil. The Democrats didn't want such a vote and Chairman Obey (D-WI) shut down the process.

On the Senate side, Appropriations Chairman Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) continued moving the bills through the Committee so that by July 18th, nine of the 12 had been approved by the committee. Then the process stopped on the Senate side as well.

The Democratic leadership will try and enact a second stimulus package to spur the weak U.S. economy. Some agencies may try to get on that bandwagon, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), whose Congressional friends, Sens. Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) have proposed a \$5 billion stand-alone boost for the agency, but might have to settle, if they get anything, for an extra \$500 million in the stimulus package.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL UPDATE

One of the last actions the Senate Appropriations Committee took before suspending its activity on the FY 2009 spending bills was to approve the Agriculture and Rural Development appropriations bill on July 18. The Committee recommended \$78.2 million for the Economic Research Service (ERS), slightly less than \$900,000 above the FY 2008 enacted level, but almost \$4 million below the President's request. In the Committee's report ERS was told to continue the implementation of the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative at "no less than the fiscal year 2008 level."

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) was allocated \$149.1 million, \$13 million below the FY 2008 enacted level and \$4.4 million below the requested amount. The Senate panel included \$37.3 million to complete the Census of Agriculture, which is ending its five-year cycle of funding. The report asks NASS to continue to "collect in-depth coverage on acreage, yield, production, inventory, production practices, sales and expenses, marketing channels, and demographics of the organics industry."

The Committee recognized the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008's (aka as the "Farm Bill") reorganization of the Research, Education and Economics activity. The panel suggested it expects the reorganization to provide "management efficiencies, if not cost savings," and wants the Department to supply baseline amounts for management funding levels for use in future comparisons.

The new Farm Bill combines the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants (NRI) program and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems into a new program called the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The Committee provided \$200 million in FY 2009 spending for AFRI. This is \$9.1 million above the FY 2008 NRI funding level. IFAFS has not received any funding in recent years. The Committee report expressed its concern with the "falling behind" of funds for research on forestry and related natural resource topics. It directed the AFRI program to put a greater emphasis on funding research on these topics.

The panel also provided \$2.6 million in FY 2009 for Agriculture and Rural Policy Research, slightly less than FY 2008 funding. Of that total, \$1.2 million will go to the Food and Agriculture Policy Institute, \$890,000 to the Rural Policies Research Institute (RUPRI), and \$500,000 to the National Drought Mitigation Center.

The Senate panel did not accept the Administration's proposal to move specific programs previously funded under the Integrated Activities account into the AFRI appropriation. The Committee recommended \$55.9 million for the Integrated Activities account, including \$1.3 million for the Regional Rural Development Centers.

Special grants are funded at \$50.7 million and include \$261,000 for the Center for Rural Studies in Vermont and \$221,000 for a Center for Public Land and Rural Economics at Utah State.

The Committee supports Hatch Act formula funding payments at \$205.6 million, about \$10 million more than FY 2008 and \$66.4 million above the President's request. The Committee did not comment on the Administration's proposal to increase the percentage of Hatch Act money that would go to nationally, competitively awarded, multi-state, multi-institutional projects.

REVISING NATIONAL POVERTY MEASURE EXAMINED AGAIN

In 1963 Molly Orshansky formulated the official national poverty measure based on the consumption of a subsistence food budget that the U.S. Department of Agriculture devised using data from the 1955 Household Consumption survey and compared it to an individual's cash income. That measure is still the way the nation counts the poverty population.

In 1995 the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) convened a panel that issued a report, *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*, calling for a new measure based on expenditures on necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter 'plus a little more.' It recommended basing the resource definition on disposable income, which measures the resources available to low income families after they pay their taxes, receive any public assistance, pay their medical bills and pay any work-related expenses, including child care. The panel also suggested including geographic price variation and updating the calculation regularly to reflect changes in spending patterns. The Academy's recommendations have been praised, become the basis for alternative poverty calculations by the Census Bureau, but they have not been implemented by the U.S. government.

On July 17, the House Ways and Means Committee's Income and Family Support Subcommittee held a hearing on measuring poverty. Subcommittee Chairman Jim McDermott (D-WA) has introduced legislation based on the NAS report to finally update the nation's official poverty statistic. He noted that the current measure was developed "before the Beatles' first trip to the U.S, before the establishment of Medicare, and before the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King." Therefore, McDermott concluded: "It is clearly time - far past time in fact - for a major update."

The Subcommittee heard from Rebecca Blank, a former COSSA Annual Meeting speaker, and Sheldon Danziger, a former COSSA Congressional Seminar speaker, both members of the NAS Panel. Blank, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and former Dean of the Gerald Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, reiterated many of the points made in her 2008 presidential address to the Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM). She declared: "It is not too strong a statement to say that, 45 years after they were developed, the official poverty thresholds are numbers without any valid conceptual basis." This is a "seriously flawed economic statistic," she added.

The impact, Blank noted, is that "our poverty measurement has been impervious to most of the policies designed to improve life among low-income families that were implemented in the decades after 1963." These included food stamps, housing benefits, major tax reforms from the 1986 tax legislation, the expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and publicly financed medical care. Because the measure of poverty has not changed, Blank testified, one consequence has been the difficulty in discerning the effects of all these policy changes on the poor. This has allowed leading critics of these policies, Blank noted, to declare they had little or no impact on poverty.

For Danziger, the Henry J. Meyer Distinguished University Professor of Public Policy at the Ford School at Michigan, the official poverty rate, despite its flaws, "is one of our nation's most important social indicators." He suggested that it is important, for historical reasons that the Census Bureau continue to publish this measure each year.

He also indicated that substantial social science research over the past three decades suggests it is time for a new measure. The recommendations of the NAS report, Danziger testified, have widespread support and McDermott's legislation "does an excellent job of specifying how the NAS panel's recommendations can be moved forward by the Census Bureau."

He responded to the concerns of critics of the new measure, including Ranking Subcommittee Member Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL), that it would lead to a higher rate of poverty and therefore increased spending on Federal anti-poverty programs. Danziger illustrated that the NAS-based statistic "is likely to be only modestly higher than the official measure." This would occur, he explained, because the two primary NAS-recommended changes would have opposite effects. Raising the income threshold would increase the number of poor simply based on total annual income. However, adopting a "comprehensive income" definition that would add cash and non-cash transfers to more accurately reflect resources available would reduce the number of poor.

New York City Redefines Poverty On Its Own

Fed up with the delay in changing the official poverty definition, Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City decided to use the NAS recommendations to create an alternative poverty measure. Mark Levitan, Director of Poverty Research for the City of New York, came to the hearing to describe the consequences.

Using the new measure, including a geographically-adjusted poverty threshold that equals \$26,318 for a family of four and a more comprehensive definition of income, Levitan indicated that the New York City poverty rate for 2006 was 23

percent compared to 18.9 percent under the 'official' definition. Looking further into the data, Levitan noted that the poverty rate for the elderly climbed from 18.1 percent to 32 percent. By contrast, the poverty rate for children hardly changed. In fact, the rate for children living in single parent families declined from 44.4 percent to 41.6 percent. From this figure, Levitan concluded that "public programs - specifically the formerly uncounted tax credits, nutritional subsidies, and housing assistance - are lifting some children out of poverty in ways that could not be seen under a measure that did not count these resources." The results, he suggested, also indicated that medical out-of-pocket spending is a considerable burden to low-income seniors.

As an aside, Levitan also called for improvement in the usefulness of the American Community Survey (ACS) in measuring poverty at the local level. Since, he suggested that increasing the ACS sample size may be impractical; he called for the Census Bureau to develop imputation techniques for use with the ACS. These would include models that can estimate tax liabilities and credits, medical out of pocket expenses, and child care costs.

Bruce Meyer, McCormick Tribune Professor at the Harris School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago, argued for using consumption data as a "better predictor of well-being than income." He testified that a revised measure of poverty should focus on data that include characteristics of the living units for individuals in poverty including homeownership, car ownership, and appliance ownership.

Doug Nelson, President of the Annie Casey Foundation, agreed with the general thrust of the hearing in calling for a new measure. He summed up the tenor of the session by quoting the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan who proclaimed: "You can't solve a problem until you first learn to measure it."

HOUSE PANEL LOOKS AT DEFENSE LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL AWARENESS TRANSFORMATION

As further evidence that fighting current and future wars will involve more than military hardware, the House Armed Services Committee's Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee held a hearing on July 9 to examine Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to improve its language and cultural capabilities. Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Vic Snyder (D-AR) noted the "historic challenge" of these efforts and the "profound implications for our success at adapting to the new realities of war in the 21st Century."

Montgomery McFate testified to the panel in "my personal capacity as a cultural anthropologist," rather than in her official capacity as the senior social science adviser to the U.S. Army's Human Terrain System (HTS). This system embeds social and behavioral scientists with troops in Afghanistan and Iraq to help with cultural and social awareness in military situations. In a previous hearing held jointly by the House Armed Services Committee and the House Science Committee an Army Colonel extolled the HTS for its contributions to his command efforts in Afghanistan (see [Update, May 5, 2008](#)).

McFate told the Subcommittee that "Socio-cultural knowledge is a critical enabler for stability operations and irregular warfare" that have become important parts of recent U.S. military activities. These require, she noted, "different skills, knowledge, training and coordination" than those tasks commonly associated with traditional combat operations. These new tasks include, in the short-term, providing security to local populations, restoring essential services, and addressing immediate humanitarian needs. Longer-term responsibilities might comprise encouraging a viable economy, developing the rule of law, promoting democratic institutions, and assisting in the creation of a robust civil society. This work, she noted further, involves cooperating with the local civilian population. Therefore, knowing how the society is organized, who has power, what their values and beliefs are, and how they interpret their history, among other things, can be keys to success, she said.

Since, as McFate declared, "making every soldier and marine into a social scientist is neither feasible nor desirable," how should the U.S. military acquire or have access to this knowledge? Multiple routes are possible, she suggested, including education, training, advisors, and databases. Professional military education still faces challenges in meeting this need, she noted, because of inadequate attention and resources to the social sciences and the development of inter-cultural and cognitive skills.

Faced with these shortcomings, McFate advocated the collection of socio-cultural information in a computerized database similar to efforts in preparing for the war in the Pacific in the 1940s. Although there was no such database at the beginning of the war in Iraq, in 2004 DOD made an effort to develop one called "Cultural Preparation of the Environment." The database didn't work well because of the lack of geospatially referenced data and the inclination of commanders in the field not to use it because of time constraints, McFate testified. This led to the military's decision to

develop the Human Terrain Teams (HTT), in which embedded human advisors also have access to databases. The DOD expects to expand the number of HTTs from the current 11 to 24 by the end of fiscal year 2008.

Andrew Krepinevich, President of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Investments, reflected the concern of Chairman Snyder in wondering about the tradeoffs for the military of enhanced language and cultural training. Would such training mean less traditional training of soldiers to fight wars? Krepinevich concluded that the rise of irregular warfare makes non-traditional training imperative and that "the military's continuing relatively high emphasis on conventional operations is to some extent misplaced." He also mentioned how demographic trends, particularly the "youth bulge" in various countries, will contribute to "an increasingly disordered world." The implications for the U.S. military, he argued, are that these trends only reinforce the prospects of irregular warfare in the future and the consequent need to increase cultural awareness.

The rest of the hearing focused on language training. Richard Brecht, Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Study and Language at the University of Maryland, argued that the "end state" of language and culture capability for DOD is a "globalized total workforce universally informed about the value of language and culture capabilities and about how to bring appropriate language and culture resources to bear when needed." This workforce, he maintained, will succeed with help from the academic, business, and heritage sectors and DOD efforts and resources.

The key, according to Brecht, is the completion of the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, a comprehensive plan that DOD is currently implementing to meet the language needs of the nation's military. A network-based language and culture resource access system that is capable of locating and providing needed language and cultural resources anytime and anywhere, Brecht maintained, would also make a huge contribution. In addition, Brecht advised, that a concentrated effort should be made in the areas of African and Asian languages and cultures. He also asserted that the DOD should continue to use its bully pulpit for improvement in language training, particularly at the K-12 level. Finally, he called for the creation of a national coordination point in the White House for language, similar to the Office of Science and Technology Policy, "to provide guidance integrating the national architecture" of language training.

NIJ CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS RESEARCH ON RACE AND CRIME, CORRECTIONS, AND MAPPING

Each summer the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) brings together over 1,200 criminal justice researchers, practitioners, and policymakers for a three day conference. This year's gathering took place on July 21 to 23 in Arlington, VA just outside Washington, DC.

Jeff Sedgwick, Acting Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs, told the crowd at lunch on the 22nd that there is always a tension between research and practice that is historical and not altogether "unhealthy." Researchers often discover that the "whole story" is rarely as tidy as practitioners would want it. As the former head of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sedgwick also made the case that "better data" would help both groups. (The Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing on Sedgwick's nomination on July 23. It is unclear whether there is enough time left in the session for the Senate to confirm him.)

David Hagy, NIJ's director was quite proud of the institute's activities and at the same lunch he reflected on NIJ's accomplishments including the DNA and property crimes initiative and the ongoing relationship with the Kennedy School of Government (KSG) on public safety issues. He announced that the KSG would also get involved with an initiative on the Future of Policing. He discussed projects on eyewitness identification and collaborative work with the Department of Homeland Security on the intelligence practices of state and local governments.

At lunch on Monday, David Kennedy of the John Jay School of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York discussed his work in High Point, NC on promoting community involvement to break up neighborhood drug markets. Kennedy, whose work translating research into action was demonstrated in Operation Ceasefire in Boston, (which helped reduce gun violence and homicides) made explicit the importance of the need to confront race in order to build common ground with affected communities to solve the drug market problem. Getting affected black communities to buy-in and overcome their dismal view of the police and overcoming the police's dismal views of the affected neighborhoods takes sustained effort and honest discussions about race, Kennedy argued. Having a police chief who understands this dynamic is another key factor. The community would then be convinced to take charge and improve their streets by helping to remove the drug markets. Kennedy reported that there has been a substantial decline in drug crime in High Point, and the next step is to replicate the success in other communities.

The conference also included a discussion of alternatives to incarceration. Michael Jacobson of the Vera Institute laid out the substantial costs to stressed state budgets and to recidivism of current correctional policies. Jacobson acknowledged the hyper-political environment of corrections policy, but suggested that the time is ripe to make progress. Dave O'Brien, Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, discussed a corrections reform legislative package currently under consideration that would move the state toward rehabilitation of non-violent offenders, using risk rather than good behavior as a condition for release, and other reforms. Former NIJ Director Sarah Hart has been O'Brien's key advisor on these reforms. Dora Schiro, Director of the Arizona Department of Corrections, noted her state's "Getting Ready" project to help prisoners re-enter society. She claimed a 35 percent reduction in recidivism at two years.

Appearing on a different panel, Christy Visher of the University of Delaware and the Urban Institute and a former COSSA Board Member, presented the results of the evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, one of the largest studies of prisoner reentry programming and impact conducted in the United States. The findings address issues of implementation of multi-agency efforts intended to not only provide services to individuals but to evoke systems change, sustainability, and effectiveness across multiple domain areas. The programs were, Visher suggested, on average, able to greatly increase services and programming for participants—but there was considerable variation among these programs and no program was fully successful in providing all planned services to all participants. The results, Visher suggested, indicate that relatively modest infusions of resources can have effects on post-release outcomes—providing an opportunity to further strengthen programs and positively impact public safety.

A panel that utilized Campbell Collaboration systematic reviews of research examined problem oriented policing, second responders, and family programs. David Weisburd of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and George Mason University suggested that the scant evidence from ten studies that met the Campbell criteria showed that problem-oriented policing seems to work. Robert Davis of the RAND Corporation reviewed studies of second responders to domestic abuse situations. He found that there was no effect on abuse reported on surveys, but that those abused seemed to demonstrate increased confidence in the police. Alex Piquero, a former COSSA Seminar speaker, reviewed the studies of early family/parent training on behavior problems and future criminal activity. After examining the effects of mostly home visitations for at-risk moms and their impact on children up to age five, Piquero concluded that these programs were highly effective and the effects persist into adolescence and adulthood.

Weisburd returned to discuss his research on "place policing," on one of many panels that looked at the relationship of spatial variables on crime. Weisburd argued that new crime mapping techniques allow researchers to examine criminal activity at the block level. Using data from Seattle, he demonstrated the effectiveness of police focus on places, so-called "hot spots," rather than individual perpetrators.

There were also many panels focusing on the technology side of the NIJ house as well as sessions on pretrial release and jail detention, youth gangs, and the methamphetamine problem.

CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT SUGGESTS NEGATIVE IMPACT ON HUMAN HEALTH AND WELFARE

The latest report from the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, *Analyses of the Effects of Global Change on Human Health and Welfare and Human Systems*, (Gamble, J.L. (ed.), K.L. Ebi, F.G. Sussman, T.J. Wilbanks, and (Authors)) anticipates "increased costs to human health and well being." However, the report also suggests that "governments' capacities for disaster planning and emergency response are key assets that should allow the U.S. to adapt to many of the health effects associated with climate change."

The expected climate changes, according to the report, include more heat waves and extreme high temperatures across all regions of the country, with the Midwest and Northeast urban areas the most vulnerable. This will increase heat stress and heat stroke with possible impacts on mortality. Extreme amounts of precipitation could lead to contaminated water and food supplies associated with gastrointestinal illnesses. More hurricanes creating storm surges are likely in the coastal zones of the Southeast Atlantic and the Gulf Coast. This will lead to injuries from flying debris and drowning, exposure to contaminated flood waters, and more mold and mildew. An increased number of wildfires are likely in California, the Intermountain West, Southwest, and Southeast parts of the U.S. They will contribute to degraded air quality that will aggravate asthmatic conditions. Increased temperatures will create higher ozone concentrations in the air in urban centers in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, leading to increased cardiovascular and pulmonary diseases.

The report also concludes that climate change is very likely to accentuate the disparities already evident in the American health care system since many of the expected health effects are likely to fall disproportionately on the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and the uninsured.

The authors point out that population growth and economic development are occurring in those areas that are likely to become vulnerable to the effects of climate change. About one-half of the U.S. population in 2008 lives in coastal areas, which will be at risk for sea level rise, especially related to severe storms and storm surge.

The report also lays out potential adaptation strategies. These include early watch and warning systems, installation of cooling systems in buildings, improved infrastructure to guard against sewer overflows, public health advisories, coordinated storm relief efforts, air quality action days, and encouragement of transportation alternatives to automobiles. For further information and the full report go to: www.climate-science.gov

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL HEALTH

As the previous story indicates concern about the connection between climate change and health is growing. As the nation's public health agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses prevention expertise to address climate change and is preparing for the possibility of health effects related to climate change in the same way it prepares for the possibilities of bioterrorism and pandemic influenza.

According to the CDC policy on climate change and public health, some of the effects of climate change are likely to include more variable weather, heat waves, heavy precipitation events, flooding, droughts, more intense storms such as hurricanes, sea level rise, and air pollution. Each of these changes has the potential to negatively affect health. While climate change is recognized as a global issue, the effects of climate change will vary across geographic regions and populations.

On July 22, Michael St. Louis, Science Officer for CDC's Coordinating Office for Global Health (COGH), provided a global health perspective at a Capitol Hill briefing coordinated by the Congressional Global Health Caucus and the Select Committee for Energy Independence and Global Warming.

St. Louis discussed CDC's policy on climate change and public health prefacing that scientific understanding of the effects of climate change is still emerging and that there is a pressing need to prepare for potential health risks nationally and abroad. St. Louis cites heat stress from the rise in temperature, injuries as a result of severe weather, asthma and cardiovascular disease and respiratory allergies, as potential negative health impacts as a result to climate change.

"The world's climate is showing signs of a shift, becoming warmer, with more precipitation and weather extremes" says St. Louis. "Climate change could ultimately set back global health more permanently and profoundly than has HIV/AIDS." St. Louis recalled the increase in world population as a source of future conflict and competition for resources. "Conflict is the leading contributor to severe poverty and lack of development...competition for agricultural and grazing land, water and energy will increase."

St. Louis put forth that short-term opportunities to save lives and improve human dignity are deeply underutilized. In contrast, he urged the strengthening of global surveillance and early warning and emergency/disaster response capacity at and through CDC offices internationally to help address climate change issues. In addition to linking surveillance globally, St. Louis suggests connecting CDC empirical data from the field with mathematical modeling efforts on climate, environment, and health.

Building on existing programs and the Essential Public Health Services, CDC has identified the following priority health actions for climate change:

1. Serve as a credible source of information on the health consequences of climate change for the U.S. population and globally.
2. Track data on environmental conditions, disease risks, and disease occurrence related to climate change.
3. Expand capacity for modeling and forecasting health effects that may be climate-related.
4. Enhance the science base to better understand the relationship between climate change and health outcomes.
5. Identify locations and population groups at greatest risk for specific health threats, such as heat waves.
6. Communicate the health-related aspects of climate change, including risks and ways to reduce them, to the public, decision makers, and healthcare providers.

7. Develop partnerships with other government agencies, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and international organizations to more effectively address U.S. and global health aspects of climate change.
8. Provide leadership to state and local governments, community leaders, healthcare professionals, nongovernmental organizations, the faith-based communities, the private sector and the public, domestically and internationally, regarding health protection from climate change effects.
9. Develop and implement preparedness and response plans for health threats such as heat waves, severe weather events, and infectious diseases.
10. Provide technical advice and support to state and local health departments, the private sector, and others in implementing national and global preparedness measures related to the health effects of climate change.
11. Promote workforce development by helping to ensure the training of a new generation of competent, experienced public health staff to respond to the health threats posed by climate change.

The Congressional Global Health Caucus provides a forum for Members of Congress, congressional staff and the global health community to share information, dialogue and enhance understanding regarding the existing and emerging global health challenges facing the U.S. and the world. For more information contact Lina Choudhry at lina.choudhry@mail.house.gov.

NSF ISSUES NEW SOLICITATION FOR SCIENCE OF SCIENCE AND INNOVATION POLICY INITIATIVE

The National Science Foundation's (NSF) Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) has issued a new solicitation for research proposals for its Science of Science and Innovation Policy (SciSIP) program. The full proposals are due December 16, 2008.

According to NSF, the SciSIP program supports "fundamental research that creates new explanatory models, analytic tools and datasets designed to inform the nation's public and private sectors about the processes through which investments in science and engineering research are transformed into social and economic outcomes."

SciSIP's goals, according to the solicitation, are "to understand the contents, structures and processes of science and engineering research, to evaluate reliably the tangible and intangible returns from investments in research and development (R&D) and to predict the likely returns from investments in future R&D."

The new competition includes three emphases: Analytical Tools, Model Building, and Data Development and Augmentation. In addition to these areas, the solicitation "particularly encourages the submission of proposals that demonstrate the viability of collecting and analyzing data on knowledge generation and innovation in organizations." These demonstration projects should address three specific aspects of the data collection approach: scalability and sustainability, protection of the confidentiality of respondents in computerized, widely accessible databases; and evaluation and assessment of the project's progress towards its scientific goals.

The proposals must include a data management plan "to ensure the accessibility of new data, metrics and indicators" developed through SciSIP supported work.

SBE anticipates funding of \$8 million, with an estimated 15 to 20 awards. Award sizes are expected to range from \$50,000 to \$400,000 in total costs. Award duration is up to three years. Additional funding may be made available if the project involves major data collection activities. The demonstration projects should not exceed \$750,000. As always, these estimates are subject to the availability of funds.

For further information contact Julia Lane 703/292-5145 or jlane@nsf.gov. For the full solicitation go to: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=501084&org=NSF&from=home.

RESEARCH SUPPLEMENTS TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY IN HEALTH-RELATED RESEARCH AVAILABLE

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognizes a unique and compelling need to promote diversity in the biomedical, behavioral, clinical and social sciences workforce. The agency expects efforts to diversify the workforce to lead to the

recruitment of the most talented researchers from all groups; to improve the quality of the educational and training environment; to balance and broaden the perspective in setting research priorities; to improve the ability to recruit subjects from diverse backgrounds into clinical research protocols; and to improve the Nation's capacity to address and eliminate health disparities.

Accordingly, the NIH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced the availability of administrative supplements (PA-08-190) to support and recruit students, post-doctorates, and eligible investigators. The supplements must support work within the scope of the original NIH-supported projects. Although the agency currently provides multiple opportunities to develop research careers and improve participation for individuals from groups with low representation in the biomedical and behavioral sciences, reports from the National Science Foundation and others provide strong evidence that diversity remains an important problem that the entire research enterprise must actively address.

According to the agencies, there is abundant evidence that the biomedical and educational enterprise will directly benefit from broader inclusion. Recent studies have supported the argument that diversity enhances the quality of education in multiple settings. There is limited evidence, however, that individuals who have participated in the NIH administrative supplement program preferentially conduct research in areas related to health disparities or minority health. The agencies emphasize that there is no question that the need for a diverse workforce permeates all aspects of the nation's health-related research effort.

The NIH has found its programs to be an effective means of encouraging institutions to recruit from currently underrepresented groups. All of the NIH awarding components participate in these programs which are designed to provide research support for research experiences for individuals from identified groups throughout the continuum from high school to the faculty level.

To this end, the NIH continues to encourage institutions to diversify their student and faculty populations and thus to increase the participation of individuals currently underrepresented in the biomedical, clinical, behavioral, and social sciences. This includes individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from socially, culturally, economically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in health-related research. Institutions are encouraged to identify candidates who will increase diversity on a national or institutional basis.

For more information about the supplements see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-08-190.html>

RESEARCH SOUGHT ON CAREERS OF WOMEN IN BIOMEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Led by the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), 18 of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) 27 Institutes and Centers are seeking research proposals on: causal factors explaining the current patterns observed in the careers of women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering and variation across different subgroups and 2) the efficacy of programs designed to support the careers of women in disciplines. The initiative will provide \$2-3 million to fund up to eight investigator-initiated awards in FY 2009.

Upon release of the funding opportunity announcement, NIH Director Elias Zerhouni noted that "through rigorous research efforts, the NIH and others will continue to close the gender gap in science and engineering. Collecting data to understand what affects the career trajectories for women and men will inform the development and adaptation of intervention strategies."

The initiative is the result of the deliberations of the NIH Working Group on Women in biomedical Careers co-chaired by Zerhouni and Vivian Penn, Director of the Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH). The Working Group was established by Zerhouni to examine and address the issues highlighted in the National Academies report, "Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering" (see Update, [October 22, 2007](#)).

According to the announcement, causal factors include individual characteristics, family and economic circumstances, disciplinary culture or practices and features of the broader social and cultural context. Research proposals must: a) include an explicit theoretical basis for the hypothesis to be tested; b) demonstrate an appreciation of the unique socio-cultural qualities and issues of the population(s) selected for the study; c) incorporate appropriate comparison or control group(s); d) adequately describe the data measures, and proposed statistical analyses to be used; and e) discuss the expected outcomes and/or lessons to be learned.

Possible research topics include but are not limited to:

Studies that focus on the educational pathway: What factors influence the decision to enter and persist in undergraduate and graduate programs in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering? Why are women more equally represented in some fields, such as psychology, sociology, and veterinary medicine, than in other science and engineering fields? Can targeted financial incentives attract talented women to academic research careers? What is the impact of financial factors on the decision to enter academic science majors or careers? What educational challenges are faced by women who are also members of underrepresented minority groups? What is the role of bias, prejudice and stereotype threat in choosing a career in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering? How do social and cultural factors (including availability of community resources, marital status, and cultural attitudes) impact educational choices?

Research on institutional factors: How does the institutional or departmental environment influence the decision to enter a graduate program or accept an academic position? Are there institutional arrangements/expectations that help or hinder the professional development of women, especially underrepresented minority women? Does the proportion of women in faculty and leadership positions within an institution, department or program influence the sex/gender distribution of applicants for graduate study and/or academic jobs? Do institutional policies and programs to address sex/gender biases in recruiting, hiring, promotion and tenure matter? What is the role of leadership in achieving sex/gender equity?

Research on individual factors: What role do financial and time factors play in recruiting and retaining women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering research careers? Can targeted financial or time incentives/benefits attract high quality female candidates to narrow sex/gender disparities? What role do time and money costs play, specifically, in the decision to enter academic versus non-academic jobs in science and engineering? What is the role of marital status and family composition in shaping careers across various disciplines? How do social and cultural expectations regarding family responsibilities affect career patterns? Do factors like child-care and care giving arrangements vary significantly among disciplines, institutions or programs? Is part-time employment compatible with or an impediment to the career advancement of junior scientists?

Causal factors explaining current career trajectories: Are there substantive differences between men and women scientists in their day-to-day activities and time use both within and outside the academic and research environment? If differences exist, how do they interact with characteristics of the academic and research environment and do they contribute to differences in patterns of career success between men and women? Do these differences explain tenure outcomes? What activities are associated with promotion from assistant to full professor? How should further analysis of these patterns inform the development of interventions and strategies?

Cross-national analyses: To what extent are there cross-national variations in sex/gender disparities in graduate degree awards and tenure positions? What can be learned from cross-national comparisons of sociocultural factors and institutional differences? Applicants must demonstrate that the proposed research is relevant in the U.S. context.

Research on intervention strategies: How effective are intervention strategies in addressing barriers for women in biomedical and behavioral science and engineering? What strategies are effective in recruiting, retaining and promoting women scientists and engineers in faculty positions? Are existing interventions effective in addressing attitudes and beliefs which discourage women from pursuing careers in these enterprises? Which programs or policies designed to reduce sex/gender disparities are cost-effective, feasible, and reproducible?

NIH Institutes and Centers supporting the funding opportunity include: NIGMS; Fogarty International Center (FIC); Center for Research Resources (NCRR); Cancer (NCI); Heart, Lung, and Blood (NHLBI); Aging (NIA); Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA); Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NBIB); Child Health and Human Development (NICHD); Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR); Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK); Mental Health (NIMH); Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS); Nursing Research (NINR); Office of AIDS Research (OAR); Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR); and ORWH.

For more information or to apply see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-GM-09-012.html>

APPLICATIONS WANTED TO STUDY INTERVENTIONS THAT PROMOTE RESEARCH CAREERS

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) is seeking research proposals that will test explicitly identified assumptions and hypotheses that undergird existing and potential interventions intended to increase interest,

motivation and preparedness for careers in biomedical and behavioral research, with a particular interest in those interventions specifically designed to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups entering careers in biomedical and behavioral research.

The Funding Opportunity Announcement ([RFA-GM-09-011](#)) reflects the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) recognition that there is significant under-representation of minority and other scientists engaged in biomedical and behavioral research in the U.S. For more than 35 years, the NIH and other federal agencies have established a variety of programs designed to redress this disparity. While the objectives and interventions of this support are generally held to be necessary, the specifics of their implementation are based on implicit assumptions, such as: 1) when students are provided the opportunity to engage in state-of-the-art biomedical and behavioral research; and 2) once focused, they will show improvement in academic and other skills needed to successfully pursue a research career in these fields. These assumptions, the agency acknowledges, are consistent with the experience of many successful scientists and make intuitive sense. Accordingly, many different programmatic interventions have evolved over the years.

To date, the assumptions underlying these interventions have generally not been systematically analyzed. Nor have the interventions been subjected to rigorous research study. Examples of questions include, but are limited to:

- **Student related:** Are some characteristics of a student (e.g., skills, preparation, attitude and knowledge) more determinative in career choice? Are some characteristics more subject to intervention? Can an optimum window for intervention be identified either by student age or level of maturity? Can behavior patterns critical for a successful biomedical/behavioral research career be taught effectively? Does the choice of a research career lead to an increased academic focus and a corresponding increase in performance?
- **Teacher/mentor related:** Can the influence of mentors or other role models be measured, linked to outcome and modified? Can specific forms of teaching, styles of pedagogy and mentoring be identified that lead to the pattern of student engagement that leads to a biomedical/behavioral research career? When are the career choices made and what are the key influences?
- **Family and environment related:** With respect to the decision to enter (or remain) in a research career, can the influence of peers, family, community and economics be distinguished, measured, linked to outcome and modified?

Given the complexity of the questions and the assumptions underlying them, it is expected that the research will require multidisciplinary approaches. Collaboration among natural, behavioral and social scientists and other appropriate experts is strongly encouraged.

The announcement follows the May 2-4 "2nd Annual Conference on Interventions that Encourage Minorities to Pursue Research Careers" held in Atlanta. Coming a year after the 2007 National Institutes of Health-(NIH) funded workshop on *Understanding Interventions* organized by the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC, the agenda of *2nd Annual Conference* was intended to inform policy and practice, while fostering a multidisciplinary community of scholars dedicated to hypothesis-based investigations of what succeeds in recruiting and sustaining underrepresented students in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) pathway into the workforce (see Update, [June 2, 2008](#)). It also followed the February 28th retreat on *Enhancing Diversity in Science* (see Update, [March 24](#) and [April 7, 2008](#)) or http://www.cossa.org/communication/diversity_workshop/diversity.html

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