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COSSA Washington Update

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WELCOME BACK! COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE RESUMES ITS BIWEEKLY PUBLICATION!

CONGRESS RETURNS: HEALTH CARE REFORM DOMINATES; CR LIKELY FOR FY 2010 SPENDING

President Obama's speech on September 10 to the joint session of Congress keeps health care reform at the forefront of the agenda for the first session of the 111th Congress. While the Congressional leadership, key committees, and the Administration continue their negotiations over changing the health care system, September has rolled around again with the next fiscal year's spending bills still unfinished. Fiscal year (FY) 2010 begins on October 1, 2009 and many agencies once again face the prospect of a Continuing Resolution (CR) to provide funding, most likely at FY 2009 levels, for their activities.

In its first week back, the Senate began consideration of the Transportation-HUD spending bill, one of eight that the Senate still needs to pass. There are four bills ready for a House-Senate conference to reconcile differences. The leadership hopes that these bills will reach the President's desk before October 1. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee expects others to move soon to the Senate floor, including the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) spending bill that includes funding for the National Science Foundation, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

If the CJS bill does not become law before the start of FY 2010, the Census Bureau will again face the need to receive special treatment (known as an anomaly) in the CR. With the 2010 count less than seven months away and despite the \$1 billion provided to Census in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Bureau cannot continue to move ahead without the large increase proposed in the FY 2010 budget.

The Senate floor schedule for the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill, which includes funding for the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Institute of Education Sciences, International and Graduate Education programs, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, remains uncertain.

Reflecting on the FY 2010 spending bill situation, House Majority Leader Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) suggested that the Congress would still try and pass individual bills even past the start of the fiscal year into November, rather than wrapping them up in Omnibus legislation as has been done in previous years.

The death of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) removes one of the ablest legislators in the modern Senate and leaves a huge void on many fronts. One of these is his leadership of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) relinquishes the helm of the Agriculture Committee to replace Kennedy as head of that panel. Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) becomes the new Chair of the Agriculture panel.

Remaining on the agenda are two pieces of authorizing legislation: Sen. Jim Webb's (D-VA) proposal to establish a commission to examine the U.S. criminal justice and prison system (see Update, [April 20, 2009](#)); and Rep. Brian Baird's bill to establish an office of social and behavioral research at the Department of Energy (see Update, [July 27, 2009](#)).

Congressional observers are also wondering about the fate of the climate change/energy legislation which has emerged from the House with a cap-and-trade system, but has not gone very far in the Senate. Even if a health care reform package gets enacted, will there be sufficient energy and political will left for a second major reform bill in one year? So far, President Obama has not resembled Lyndon Johnson and this is not 1965.

COLLINS CONFIRMED AS NIH DIRECTOR: OUTLINES FIVE AREAS OF OPPORTUNITIES IN CONSTITUENT MEETING

On August 7, the U.S. Senate confirmed Francis Collins as the 16th director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Collins was sworn into office on August 17. On his first day as director Collins held an "all-hands town meeting" to greet the NIH staff and to outline some of his thoughts about the challenges and opportunities that face the agency. One year and 15 days after he stepped down as the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) to become a special volunteer, to think about the future and serve on President Obama's transition team, Collins declared that it was "great to be home." He acknowledged that serving as the NIH director will be an "enormous challenge, exciting, daunting, and the most amazing job that anyone can ask for."

Noting that he was "thrilled to be nominated by Obama," Collins related that the President sees "science as a real solution." The same can be said about Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, Collins indicated. He noted his bosses' "sharp minds" and "inquisitive natures" and that he hoped to see them pay a visit to the NIH.

Collins expressed his "sincere thanks" to Raynard Kington "for serving most ably as the Acting Director of NIH since November 1, 2008." He recognized that Kington led "the NIH through a tumultuous period with a steady and thoughtful hand. As a result, NIH is truly in superb shape today." He also expressed his gratitude that Kington has agreed to return to his position as NIH Deputy Director. Likewise, he expressed his appreciation to Larry Tabak who served as the Acting Deputy Director, in addition to retaining his responsibility as director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), for the last nine months. He also recognized Tabak's contributions to the "rapid NIH formulation and implementation" of the agency's plan to allocate the \$10.4 billion it received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

On September 9, Collins met with the representatives of more than 300 NIH constituent organizations on the NIH campus in the first of its kind of meeting by an incoming NIH director, reflecting the Administration's earnestness to dialogue and partner with outside groups. The meeting also served to demonstrate the Administration's support and an indication of its value of science, Collins shared. Openness is of great importance across the government and "NIH should be at the forefront," he insisted. He seemed surprised at the "amazing turnout" by the scientific community at the meeting.

Collins reviewed the NIH's mission -- the discovery of "fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to extend health life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability." He related that people assume he would become focused on "big science" given his leadership of the NHGRI. He reiterated that investigator-initiated research is the engine of biomedical progress, but also emphasized that big science is important too and that he is interested in both. There are areas where big science can empower everyone, Collins stated, and indicated that he will try to figure out how to support that science.

Five Areas of Opportunities

Collins emphasized five "fairly broad" areas of opportunities. He cautioned the audience to not "keep score" of what was mentioned and what was not. He submitted that whatever disorder those attending the town hall were concerned about "one or more of these opportunities hold great promise."

1. **Applying unprecedented opportunities in genomics and other high throughput technologies (e.g., nanotechnologies, proteomics, imaging and computational biology) to understand fundamental biology questions and to uncover the causes of specific diseases.** Collins emphasized that science is breaking down the barriers between our understanding of disease and the "notion" that we could approach science "in a compartmentalized way has turned out to be wrong." He emphasized the need to lift "all boats" by understanding "how we are connected scientifically and other ways as well, including politically and other ways." Examples of where this kind of effort will pay big dividends include cancer, heart disease, autism, obesity, and Alzheimer's disease, he insisted.
2. **Translating basic science discoveries into new and better treatments - the translational agenda.** He emphasized that that this cannot just be a private sector enterprise. Public and private partnerships will bring together academic investigators, empowering them to "build a bridge" to the private sector.
3. **Putting science to work for the benefit of the health care reform.** If you look at all of the issues that swirl about health care in the U.S., there are inefficiencies in the system, Collins noted. Comparative effectiveness research (CER) is one area that the NIH has been encouraged increase its efforts, he added. He explained that CER supported by NIH examines alternative approaches to a given clinical problem and tries to determine what works. He stressed that it is necessary to "be thoughtful about that because you would not want to lose the individual in the process of those studies." He acknowledged that as one who has been interested in personalized medicine this is a concern for him but he believes that there are ways to design those studies to achieve both goals. Not only do we need to do CER, Collins noted, but the NIH need to invest more in pharmacogenomics and the "whole personalized medicine agenda needs to be put forward." He cited the need to understand the causes and interventions for health disparities, "a major, important task."

Collins also emphasized that "none of this is going to work if we don't invest in social and behavioral research because a lot of the hoped for interventions will require an understanding of how people absorb individual information and actually alter their own health behaviors." An area of "great interest" said Collins is the area of health care economics. "What is it that NIH can do to better understand and how we can implement a plan for intervening in our ever-growing health care costs that would rein in costs but improve outcomes." He questioned whether there are payment incentive models that can be compared to each other in a research environment that can answer some of the questions that are being posited.

4. **Encouraging a greater focus on global health in concert with such partners as the World Health Organization, the Gates Foundation and other philanthropies.**
5. **Reinvigorating and empowering the biomedical and behavioral research enterprise by making sure that funds are available to support younger investigators, increase work force diversity, and encourage risk taking and innovation.** He noted that the U.S. has lost "quite a bit" of its competitiveness in the last few years because of NIH's flat budget from 2003-2008. During that time investigators had greater difficulty in getting their research funded. Up until 2008 if you submitted a grant proposal to NIH, there was about a twenty percent likelihood of receiving an award. Nobody would argue that that is healthy for our particular

environment, said Collins, especially young investigators who are trying to discern whether research is a stable career. He emphasized the need to support the community in the best way that we can, including trying to make the case for the value of medical research to anyone who will listen. Citing as an example, the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, Collins emphasized the need for the NIH to take the resources it receives from the Administration and the Congress and apply them creatively (see related article).

Collins also discussed the \$10.4 billion the NIH received in ARRA funding and noted that he has read through hundreds of summary statements for the NIH Challenge Grants. One of ARRA's goals is to stimulate the economy something the NIH does quite well, Collins contended. For every grant NIH gives about seven jobs are created. Every \$1 the NIH gives out to a grantee pays back more than \$2 in economic goods and services in less than a year, he added. But the NIH's goal, he acknowledged, is to stimulate biomedical research and take advantage of the pent-up demand and interest by investigators to tackle innovative and challenging problems. ARRA allows the agency to take on some really big projects that might have otherwise would have been delayed, he added.

Collins ended his remarks by indicating that he needs the help of the scientific community to support medical research. Referencing the "wonderful two- year deluge" of funding, he cautioned, however, that science does not operate on two-year cycles. A lot of the projects started with the ARRA funding will need ongoing support. To make that happen the community needs to speak effectively about the value of this funding, he maintained. Collins noted that he needed the community's help in propagating a common and consistent voice in support of the importance of medical research and how this research has changed lives. There is a need for new and compelling ways to describe NIH research to decision makers and the public, he insisted, and indicated that he would like to see the channels of communication more open than the community has seen in the past. To that end, he asked the organizations to put together one to two page summaries of the issues that they think need NIH's attention and send those to NIH-Listens@nih.gov. The NIH will try to respond to those issues that need more than a "thank you" in a timely way, he concluded.

Collins' presentation as well as the Q & A can be viewed at <http://videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=15263>.

RECOVERY ACT FUNDING INCREASES SCRUTINY OF SPENDING BY AGENCIES

Even as the economy appears on its way to recovery, the lingering unemployment problem is likely to amplify the debate in Washington regarding the efficacy of the \$787 billion fiscal stimulus package, particularly as it relates to job creation. Congress has increased its attention to the distribution of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA/Recovery Act) monies. On September 10, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs held the fifth in a series of hearings entitled, *Follow the Money: An Update on Stimulus Spending, Transparency, and Fraud Prevention*. Committee Chair Joseph Lieberman (I-CT) explained that given the "mixed news" about the economy the hearing was a "status check of what's been done so far, and the capabilities of all levels of government to administer Recovery Act programs as the pace of spending picks up this fall as planned." He also emphasized that "besides the spending of stimulus money, another topic of the hearing" was the Committee's "continued interest in the transparency of Recovery Act spending." Ranking Committee member Susan Collins (R-ME) echoed Lieberman and noted that the Committee has "conducted oversight to help ensure that these funds are used as intended: to help revitalize the economy by creating jobs, improving roads and bridges, sustaining vital health care programs, and investing in infrastructure and science." Collins also acknowledged that "striking the right balance between speed and caution has been a challenging task."

One area that has bothered the critics of the stimulus has been the use of these funds for research and how that relates to the goal of job creation. On September 11, Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), ranking member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, sent a letter to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) asking it "to examine the use of the \$10 billion in stimulus funds received" by the National Institute of Health (NIH). Specifically, Barton indicated that the Committee "would like information on the process and criteria used for awarding grants that were made available through ARRA monies, and the extent to which these may have varied from the process and criteria typically used by NIH to award grants." "Additionally, we are interested in obtaining information on grantee estimates of the number of jobs created or maintained through grant awards funded with ARRA monies." According to the letter to GAO Acting Comptroller Gene Dodaro, the Committee would like the information "before the final awards under the program are completed."

Over the last several of months, NIH has begun to distribute the \$10.4 billion (over two years) in resources it received via the Recovery Act. Appropriately, and as expected, universities and research institutions have been publicizing the competitively, peer-reviewed research grants researchers at their respective institutions have been awarded from the agency and the number of jobs retained or created as a result. In keeping with the Obama Administration's efforts at

transparency and per the legislation, this information is available on the agency's website and is designed to provide the public with information about ARRA awards.

The stimulus' requirement of transparency makes it easy for those who seek to discredit some of the research supported by ARRA. It allows critics to point to studies, most of them in the social and behavioral sciences, that they deem not important enough to fund or the title of the research project can be easily ridiculed. Much of this research usually revolves around sex, HIV/AIDS, and mental health, and is conducted in those populations where disparate health status currently exists. The amendment by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) to the House-passed Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill in July, which rescinds or prohibits NIH from spending money on three currently-funded, peer-reviewed grants that focus on HIV/AIDS prevention among vulnerable populations, is the most prominent example of the recent scrutiny of NIH-funded research at the national level (see Update, [July 27, 2009](#)). The Senate is scheduled to take up its version of the spending bill sometime this fall. Whether the Senate will consider its version as a stand-alone bill or as part of an omnibus package is still uncertain.

Protecting Peer Reviewed Studies from Attack

To respond to attacks on peer-reviewed grants, in 2004, COSSA, the American Psychological Association (APA) and 60 other scientific and public health organizations came together to form the [Coalition to Protect Research](#) (CPR). Part of that effort included the creation of a petition in support of peer review. To date, more than 5,000 scientists have signed CPR's [Petition to the U.S. Congress to Support Scientific Integrity](#). In anticipation of an escalation of the criticism and attacks directed at the NIH as the agency distributes the remaining Recovery dollars, CPR has revived its petition. One goal of the Coalition is that scientific community, particularly the social and behavioral science community, should be prepared to defend the science and the NIH's peer review process.

NIH: RECOVERY ACT FUNDS MAKING AN IMPACT

According to the latest information on its website, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has provided funding for more than 7,700 grant proposals from the \$10.4 billion it received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). NIH anticipates that another 15,000 awards are in the queue. In June, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius announced that the agency had received "approximately 22,000 applications for Challenge Grants" alone, which equaled to the total number of applications the NIH receives in a year.

The Challenge Grant is a new program created in response to ARRA and was designed to invest in targeted research of the highest quality that will impact both economic growth and human health and is intended to spur new areas of research and trigger an influx of dollars into communities across the country. Fifteen broad scientific areas were identified as areas the agency believes will benefit from a jumpstart or in which scientific challenges need to be overcome. The topics include behavioral change and prevention, health disparities, bioethics, translational science, enhancing clinical trials, and genomics (see Update, [March 9, 2009](#)). NIH expects to begin awarding the Challenge Grants by the end of September and before the start of the new fiscal year.

Fogarty Center Supports Expansion of Global Health Studies

The NIH's 27 institutes and centers have also set their own priorities for Recovery Act funding within their institute's research domain. For example, ARRA funding will allow the NIH through the Fogarty International Center (FIC) to support four more schools (Dartmouth, UC Irvine, University of New Mexico, and Yale) to satisfy the demand for global health studies, joining the 12 institutions awarded the Center's prestigious Framework grants. The grants make it possible for faculties to work across disciplines to bring their expertise to bear on improving global health. In announcing the award, FIC's director Roger I. Glass, explained that Framework will make America "more competitive in the global health arena." The NIH considers this program "as creating the infrastructure for America's international research and training, which links to the U.S. and foreign scientific community, and ultimately results in better health at home and strong diplomacy abroad." Since the program's inception in 2005, 35 schools have received the award, allowing faculty from more than 17 different disciplines, including schools of medicine, public health, law, engineering, environmental sciences, business, and journalism, among others. The Recovery Act awards to the four new schools will allow the institutions to fund or partially fund faculty positions, coordinator positions, summer fellowships, administrative assistants and consulting work, in addition to developing new courses to meet the demand for global health professionals.

FIC Recovery Act funding is also providing support for 23 fellowships for early career scientists and increases the ranks of researchers and clinicians working in the global health field. FIC is providing \$3 million in funding for 18 months to support the 23 fellowships as part of its Clinical Research Training Scholars and Fellows Program. The award was made to the Vanderbilt University Institute for Global Health which administers the scholars program managed by

Fogarty. The program provides a year of mentored clinical research training at NIH-funded research sites in the developing world. "Researchers in post-doctoral positions are vulnerable during this economic downturn," Glass noted.

In response to the continuing complex and challenge of developing interventions to reduce the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections among heterosexual men, couples, and ethnically diverse populations, the National Institute of Mental Health is supporting a number of "meritorious and innovative research studies," according to its director Tom Insel. NIMH plans not only to use Recovery Act funds to support "meritorious proposals that were previously out of reach, but to supplement current efforts, expediting progress towards [the agency's goal] of profoundly reducing HIV infection."

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) is using some of its Recovery Act resources to support a study of parent's role in adolescent eating and activity behaviors. Project F-EAT (Families and Eating and Activity in Teens) is designed to examine the role of parents and the home environment in adolescents' food intake, physical activity, body image and weight control behaviors. It is led by Dianne R. Neumark-Sztainer of the University of Minnesota and will complement existing NHLBI-funded by Neumark-Sztainer which examines the role of peer, school and neighborhood characteristics on young people's behaviors. The new award will allow Neumark-Sztainer to retain 11 individuals (researchers, post doctoral associates/graduate students, and project assistants) and create two new research positions. Announcing the award, NHLBI director Elizabeth Nabel noted that "through this work, we will be better able to develop interventions and public health programs that promote the weight-related health of young people."

SUNSTEIN CONFIRMED TO HEAD THE OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS



After months of delay and attacks from both the left and right, the Senate on September 10, by a vote of 57-40, confirmed Cass Sunstein to head the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the White House Office of Management and Budget. On the previous day, the Senate voted 63-35 to invoke cloture to halt the delay in bringing Sunstein's nomination to the floor.

Congress created OIRA in the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980. OIRA's responsibilities include: the implementation of government-wide policies and standards with respect to Federal regulations and guidance documents; the quality, utility, and analytic rigor of information used to support public policy; dissemination of and access to government information; privacy and confidentiality; electronic records; and Federal statistics.

Currently the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, Sunstein was previously at the University of Chicago for 27 years, where he was a professor in the law school and the department of political science. At Harvard, he directed its program on risk regulation.

Sunstein began his career clerking for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall and as a legal adviser to the Office of General Counsel in President Carter's Justice Department before moving to academe. His legal scholarship has focused on constitutional law, administrative law, environmental law, as well as collaborations with behavioral economists, such as Richard Thaler.

A prolific author, Sunstein's most recent books are: *On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, What Can Be Done*; *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide*; and *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* with Richard Thaler.

He is member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Law Institute. He has served as Chair of the Administrative Law Section of the American Association of Law Schools and as vice-chair of the ABA Committee on Separation of Powers and Governmental Organizations. Sunstein has B.A. and J.D. degrees from Harvard.

FINANCIAL MODELING AND ECONOMICS: ARE THEY TO BLAME FOR THE ECONOMIC CRISIS?

Almost one year after the demise of Lehman Brothers and the collapse of the financial services industry as we knew it, the House Science and Technology's (S&T) Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight held a hearing originally titled "The Risks of Economic Modeling," but later changed to "The Risks of Financial Modeling: VaR and the Economic Meltdown."

According to the Committee, since it has jurisdiction over the National Science Foundation (NSF) and basic research in economics gets significant funding from that agency, there was justification for the hearing. Even though NSF rarely supports research into finance and as the hearing suggested most of the financial models were created by physicists and mathematicians.

Picking up where many others have gone the few months (see [The Economist](#), Paul Krugman in the New York Times Magazine) Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC) opened the hearing with some disparaging remarks about economics, referencing one more time Harry Truman's search for the one-handed economist and George Bernard Shaw's crack about economists' inability to reach a conclusion.

Called "two rock stars" by Miller for their many appearances on television financial shows, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Professor of Risk Engineering at NYU and author of the book *Black Swans*, and Richard Bookstaber, identified as a "financial author" and former risk manager at a number of firms including Salomon Brothers, were the opening witnesses.

What the Subcommittee wanted to hear about was a system of risk management known as Value at Risk (VaR), which is a tool developed to help financial services' companies analyze whether their investments were in danger of losing money, and whether it was responsible for the crisis. VaR measures the risk of a portfolio of assets by estimating the probability that a given loss may occur. (For an explanation of VaR and how it worked and didn't work in 2008 see Joe Nocera's article in the [New York Times Magazine](#), January 4, 2009.) As Taleb and Bookstaber both pointed out VaR works fairly well when examining risk for most of the normal distribution. It does not, however, work for extreme events, such as the meltdown that occurred last year.

Taleb, noting his own success at predicting how lousy VaR is as a tool and that "these problems have been obvious all along," made it clear that he believed "unfortunately, economics resembles pre-modern medicine." Bookstaber, on the other hand, indicated that more attention should have been paid to "the limitations of the normal distribution." He also was unwilling to simply blame the VaR model for the disaster, suggesting other culprits "such as sheer stupidity or collective management failure." "VaR was not central to this crisis. Focus would be better placed on failures in risk governance rather than risk models," he concluded.

This is pretty much where Subcommittee Ranking Republican Paul Broun (R-GA) also came out, noting in his opening statement that: "Ultimately, decisions have to be made based on a number of variables which should include scientific models, but certainly not exclusively...No model will ever relieve a banker, trader, or risk manager of the responsibility to make difficult decisions and hedge for inevitable uncertainty."

As the hearing moved on, the role of VaR faded and Members gave the witnesses a chance to either confirm or refute the Members' views of who the real culprits were. The hearing soon more resembled a Financial Services Committee hearing (some members of S&T also serve on that panel). This gave the members a chance to rail against investment firms, the bailout, the stimulus package, and surging deficits, and to ask whether some financial products should be banned.

Call for Better Peer Review at NSF

The second panel included David Colander, an economics professor at Middlebury College and one of the authors of the "Dahlem Report: The Financial Crisis and the Systemic Failure of Academic Economics," which chided the economics profession for its failure to warn society about the impending financial crisis.

His testimony denigrated the Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium model, a key to macroeconomic explanations for many years. He also blamed graduate training in economics for teaching future economists how to develop models, but not how to use them with judgment to arrive at policy conclusions.

Colander offered a number of possible solutions that “might help add a common sense check on models” and improve the response to future crises. One suggestion he proffered “would be to include a wider range of peers in the reviewing process of NSF grants in the social sciences.” For example, Colander would like physicists, mathematicians, statisticians, and even business and governmental representatives, to serve, along with economists, on reviewing committees for economics’ proposals.

Colander would also “increase the number of researchers trained in interpreting models rather than developing them.” This could occur by having NSF provide research grants for this work through an applied science division.

BJS LEADER OUTLINES NCVS RESTORATION AND RENOVATION

Speaking at the September 11 meeting of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS), Acting Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Michael Sinclair discussed the agency’s plans to restore and renovate the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS).

The call to improve the NCVS was made in the National Academies’ report *Surveying Victims: Options for Conducting the National Crime Victimization Survey*. The Administration requested an additional \$15 million in BJS’ FY 2010 budget to assist in this endeavor. The House and Senate have both agreed to include this funding, but in the Senate Appropriations Committee’s bill the overall number for BJS would provide very little funding for anything else the agency does (see Update, [June 29, 2009](#)).

The NCVS measures the national incidence of personal victimization and property theft through personal interviews with a national representative sample survey. It is the only national source of unreported crime information. Lack of funding in recent years has threatened both the integrity and future of the survey.

One of the major efforts in the new redesign, according to Sinclair, is to respond to the NAS report’s call for enhancing knowledge of crime at sub-national levels. In addition, the survey needs to improve its data quality, sampling precision, flexibility as well as lower costs.

The near-term goals, according to Sinclair, are to increase survey precision by enlarging sample sizes, enhancing stratification. Another short-term improvement will come by upgrading the laptops used by the Census to conduct the survey and to enhance field interviewer training. Sinclair also hopes to develop a research center to provide access to micro-survey data, similar to those used by other agencies to grant such access.

Over the long-term, Sinclair suggested the need to implement data quality and cost metrics, review comprehensively screener and incident reports, and strengthen an on-going methodological research program. He also wants to explore the possibility of yearly specific subject modules as additions to the core survey.

If Congress appropriates the additional funds, BJS will spend the next few years developing small area (local) estimations and examining their costs. BJS will conduct panel meetings to seek ideas and surface issues. It will explore questionnaire revisions and new modes of administration. In addition, BJS, Sinclair reported, will also examine different sampling strategies including using other federal surveys to ask the screening question - Are you a crime victim? - then develop the sample for the NCVS from those responses. Research and field tests will also occur.

In a recent meeting with State Statistical Analysis Centers and Offices of Public Safety, Sinclair noted, BJS learned that these stakeholders believed it was critical to build the sub-national system. The meeting attendees stressed that State and local data provide the information that affects policy and practice. In fact, some states have created NCVS-like surveys to fill this void, which police have found useful. Down the road, BJS was told, states would like to have the opportunity to add specific questions. Sinclair suggested that initially a pilot program, in perhaps ten states, could occur soon. Sinclair concluded that the finalization of the new design and its implementation will probably not occur until 2013.

BEA DIRECTOR DISCUSSES GDP AND BEYOND



Seeking better and more useful measures of economic activity continues to be a mighty quest. Steve Landefeld, director of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) also spoke at the COPAFS meeting on September 11, and explored the issue of how to improve our measurement of economic progress and sustainability. Is there a better way to measure these concepts other than the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which BEA produces and which remains the major data point of our economic well-being, he rhetorically inquired?

He noted that in the past people such as Senator Robert Kennedy and Nobel economist Simon Kuznets argued that GDP had limitations as an indicator for how well a nation was doing. In recent years, President Obama in his inaugural address commented: "The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity; on the ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart -- not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good." French President Nicolas Sarkozy has established a Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress chaired by Columbia University professor, Nobel Prize winner, and former Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Joseph Stiglitz. In addition, an organization called the State of the USA has sprung up in hopes of "producing objective, independent, scientifically grounded, and widely shared quality information on where we are and where we are going, on both an absolute and relative basis, including comparisons to other nations."

Landefeld noted that BEA has an immense research agenda to help improve these measures of economic progress. In recent times, it has examined sustainability, Green GDP (which got it in some trouble with some in Congress), and other items. Yet, even within its current measurements in the National Income and Product Accounts, BEA can examine the data in different slices to provide alternative numbers to the official GDP. One can look at disposable personal income in total, by per capita, as take home pay, with or without government transfer payments. You could also adjust the data for regional differentiations that could change state to state comparisons.

Another possible distortion of State economic well-being, Landefeld mentioned, was how you count retirement income. Is it from the recipients' current address or from the State from where he/she earned income or a pension; e.g., the former Maryland State employee who now lives and spends income in Florida.

BEA, Landefeld concluded, continues to pursue improvements in GDP, including asking for additional funds to better measure sectors of the economy, such as financial services and energy.

PRB 2009 DATA SHEET FINDS WORLD POPULATION ON THE RISE DESPITE LOW BIRTHRATES

On August 12, The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) released its *2009 World Population Data Sheet* and its summary report which provides up-to-date demographic, health, and environment data for all the countries and major regions of the world. PRB's Carl Haub, Linda Jacobsen, Mary Mederios Kent, and James Gribble discussed population change and how it will shape the prospects of regions and countries over the next half century and presented highlights on children and youth, the theme of this year's data sheet. The webcast can be viewed at: <http://www.ebmcdn.net/prb/html/prb-2009datasheet/index.html>.

According to the 2009 data sheet, global population numbers are on track to reach 7 billion in 2011, just 12 years after reaching 6 billion in 1999. The geographic imbalance in population growth seen over the last century will only intensify in the years to come. Between 2009 and 2050, virtually all population growth will take place in the least developed countries (LDCs).

The report noted that the small amount of population growth projected for more developed countries (MDCs) will occur mostly in the United States and Canada. In many more MDCs, most growth will likely happen due to immigration from the LDCs. In the United States, however, natural increase (births minus deaths) still accounts for more than 50 percent of annual population growth. While the LDC's are projected to increase from 5.6 billion in 2009 to 8.1 billion in 2050, the MDCs are projected to grow from 1.2 billion to just 1.3 billion.

"Even with declining fertility rates in many countries, world population is still growing at a rapid rate," said Bill Butz, PRB's president. "The increase from 6 billion to 7 billion is likely to take 12 years, as did the increase from 5 billion to 6 billion. Both events are unprecedented in world history."

The projection for population growth in developing countries assumes that fertility in those countries will fall to the same low levels as in today's developed countries, around two children per woman. That is quite an assumption. Currently, the highest fertility rate is in Niger, 7.4 children per woman. The lowest rate is in Taiwan, one child per woman.

The impact of these high birth rates is enormous. PRB reports that Uganda is projected to have more than double Canada's population by 2050 with Ugandan women having 6.7 children on average, five more than the average for Canadian women.

The LDCs also have most of the world's youth population, according to PRB, creating tremendous pressure to find employment for these folks. "The great bulk of today's 1.2 billion youth—nearly 90 percent—are in developing countries," said Carl Haub, PRB senior demographer and co-author of the data sheet. Eight in 10 of those youth live in Africa and Asia. "During the next few decades, these young people will most likely continue the current trend of moving from rural areas to cities in search of education and training opportunities, gainful employment, and adequate health care." One of the major social questions of the next few decades is whether their expectations will be met.

In a September 3, 2009 follow-up PRB online discussion about the 2009 data sheet, Haub reiterated that there remains a large amount of population growth in many countries, pointing to Sub-Saharan Africa to add more than a billion before growth stops and even India could reach two billion despite having a moderately low birth rate. The transcript of the discussion is available at: <http://discuss/prb.org/content/interview/detail/3724>.

Other data sheet highlights include:

Youth: About one in five people, over 1.2 billion people, are between the ages of 15 and 24. The United Nations estimates the world's median age to be 28.9. By 2050, it is projected to be 38.4.

Gender: Since 1950, the greatest gains in life expectancy at birth occurred among women. Worldwide, men have higher mortality and greater disability than women. In nearly every country, men die at younger ages. However, women spend about 15 percent of their lives in poor health, compared with about 12 percent for men.

Environment: The widespread use of fossil fuels such as oil and coal has led to the release of enormous amounts of heat-absorbing gases into the atmosphere.

NIH UNVEILS NEW 'USER-FRIENDLY' RePORTER WEBSITE

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently unveiled a new, "user-friendly system," RePORT Expenditures and Results (RePORTER), designed to provide comprehensive funding information on NIH grants and contracts. RePORTER combines several databases with a "robust search engine" which allows users to locate descriptions and funding details on NIH-funded projects along with research results that cite NIH support. RePORTER is the newest tool on the RePORT website, NIH's comprehensive online repository of reports, data, and analyses of research-related funding.

RePORT is designed to provide extensive data on NIH's research-related grant and contract funding, including general reports and statistics, funding by research, condition and disease categories, new data visualization tools, and more. It also allows for dynamic reports and geographic mapping tools, offering unparalleled access to information on NIH's Recovery Act grant funding on an individual project, state or national level.

User-defined searches allow the public to refine, export and analyze results and provide insights into NIH spending, as well as research results across NIH-funded projects, institutions, investigators or scientific concepts. RePORTER allows easy searches for grants funded by the Recovery Act via a checkbox that limits searches to that area of interest. Plans for improvements in RePORTER include allowing users to personalize their experience. NIH's goals are to provide users the ability to save favorite searches, set alerts for new grants, publications and patents, as well as export the entire RePORTER database.

"With the addition of RePORTER, we have taken a big step toward providing NIH's broad community of stakeholders—including biomedical researchers, research administrators, science policy makers, and members of the general public –

with richer information, accessible in a form designed to meet their diverse set of needs," said Sally Rockey, acting deputy director of extramural research. "In addition to a being a public service to our stakeholders, it's a good example of the transparency and openness in government that the public deserves and has come to expect."

RePORT is available at <http://report.nih.gov/>. The project search tool, RePORTER, is available through the RePORT site or by going directly to <http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm>.

NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR NATION'S HIGHEST SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HONORS

The **National Medal of Science**, established by Congress in 1959, is the Nation's highest honor for American scientists and engineers presented annually by the President of the United States. The government seeks nominations for the 2010 medals. **The deadline for nominations is November 5, 2009.**

The Medals are presented to individuals deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to knowledge in the chemical, physical, biological, social or behavioral sciences, mathematics, or engineering. Since its establishment, the National Medal of Science has been awarded to 449 distinguished scientists and engineers whose careers span decades of research and development. These laureates have impacted the current state of science, promoted new lines of thinking in their disciplines, and contributed to economic development.

Eligibility criteria, the nomination guidelines, and a database of previous winners are available at www.nsf.gov/od/nms/medal.jsp. Candidates must be living U.S. citizens or permanent residents who have applied for citizenship within the past 12 months. For further information contact: Mayra N. Montrose 703-292-8040 or nms@nsf.gov.

The **Vannevar Bush Award** honors truly exceptional lifelong leaders in science and technology who have made substantial contributions to the welfare of the Nation through public service activities in science, technology, and public policy. The award was established in 1980 in the memory of Vannevar Bush, who served as a science advisor to President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II, helped to establish Federal funding for science and engineering as a national priority during peacetime, and was instrumental in creating the National Science Foundation.

Candidates for the Vannevar Bush Award should have demonstrated outstanding leadership and accomplishment in meeting at least two of the following selection criteria:

- Distinguished him/herself through public service activities in science and technology.
- Pioneered the exploration, charting, and settlement of new frontiers in science, technology, education, and public service.
- Demonstrated leadership and creativity that have inspired others to distinguished careers in science and technology.
- Contributed to the welfare of the Nation and mankind through activities in science and technology.
- Demonstrated leadership and creativity that has helped mold the history of history of advancements in the Nation's science, technology, and education.

The deadline for nominations and reference letters is November 4, 2009. For questions concerning the award, please contact Jennifer Richards at jrichar@nsf.gov.

The **Alan T. Waterman Award** is the highest honor awarded by the National Science Foundation to a promising scientist or engineer at the dawn of their professional career. Since 1975, when Congress established the prize to honor the agency's first director, the annual award has been bestowed upon individuals who have demonstrated exceptional individual achievement in scientific or engineering research of sufficient quality to place them at the forefront of their peers. The annual award recognizes an outstanding young researcher in any field of science or engineering supported by the National Science Foundation. In addition to a medal, the recipient receives a grant of \$500,000, over a three year period for scientific research or advanced study in the mathematical, physical, biological, engineering, social or other sciences at the institution of the recipient's choice.

Candidates must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents and must be 35 years of age or younger or not more than seven years beyond receipt of their Ph.D. degree by December 31 of the year in which they are nominated. Candidates should have demonstrated exceptional individual achievements in scientific or engineering research of sufficient quality to place them at the forefront of their peers. Criteria include originality, innovation and significant impact on the field. **The deadline for nominations is November 5, 2009.**

For more information contact: Mayra N. Montrose, 703-292-8040 or waterman@nsf.gov and go to: www.nsf.gov/od/waterman/waterman.jsp.

SRCD POLICY FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) is seeking applications for the upcoming Policy Fellowships for 2010-2011. There are two types of Fellowships: Congressional and Executive Branch. Both provide Fellows with exciting opportunities to come to Washington, DC and use their research skills in child development outside of the academic setting. Fellows work as resident scholars within their federal agency or Congressional office placements to help inform and influence public policy. The goals of these fellowships are: (1) to contribute to the effective use of scientific knowledge in developing public policy, (2) to educate the scientific community about the development of public policy, and (3) to establish a more effective liaison between scientists and the federal policy-making mechanisms. The career stages of SRCD Fellows vary; some are early in their careers and some are more advanced.

Fellowships are full-time immersion experiences and run from September 1st through August 31st. Applicants must have a doctoral-level degree in any relevant discipline (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., J.D.), must demonstrate exceptional competence in an area of child development research, and must be a member of SRCD. **The deadline is December 15, 2009.**

More information about the Fellowships and application instructions are available online at www.srcd.org under the Policy and Communications tab, or by calling (202) 289-7903.

NIGMS SEEKS PROPOSALS ON HOW TO INCREASE INTEREST IN BIOMEDICAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH CAREERS

In recognition that there is a significant under-representation of minority and other scientists engaged in biomedical and behavioral research, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking grant proposals on research designed to test assumptions and hypotheses regarding social and behavioral factors with the aim of advising and guiding the design of potential interventions intended to increase interest, motivation and preparedness for careers in biomedical and behavioral research. "Intervention" includes both broad programs and the cumulative effects of multiple activities as well as more narrowly specified interventions, or specific activities within a larger program.

NIGMS is particularly interested in those interventions that are specifically designed to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups entering careers in these disciplines. According to the announcement (RFA-GM-10-008), to date, few interventions are based on theoretically grounded research. Similarly, the ideas underlying the interventions have generally not been synthesized or analyzed systematically. Neither have the interventions been subjected to rigorous research study. Proposed research need not be restricted to underrepresented minority students. Comparative research that analyzes the experience of all groups in order to place that of underrepresented students in context and to learn whether and how interventions should be tailored to make these students successful in biomedical and behavioral careers may be illuminating and is, therefore, encouraged.

Recognizing that most of these questions and the underlying assumptions are complex in nature, NIGMS expects that their study will require multidisciplinary approaches. Collaboration among natural, behavioral, and social scientists, and other experts, is considered appropriate and is strongly encouraged.

Applications are due October 22, 2009. For more information see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-GM-10-008.html>.

APPLICATIONS SOUGHT FOR NIH DIRECTOR'S PIONEER AWARD AND NEW INNOVATOR AWARD

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking applications for its Pioneer Award and the NIH Director's New Innovator Award. New investigators are eligible for both awards. The awards are components of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research designed to support exceptionally creative scientists who propose "highly innovative - and often unconventional - approaches to major challenges in biomedical or behavioral research." Women and members of groups that are underrepresented in NIH research areas are especially encouraged to apply.

Pioneer Award

The NIH Director's Pioneer Award Program complements NIH's traditional, investigator-initiated grant programs by supporting individual scientists of exceptional creativity who propose pioneering and possibly transforming approaches to addressing major biomedical or behavioral challenges. The proposed research is considered pioneering if it reflects ideas substantially different from those already pursued in the investigator's laboratory or elsewhere.

Applications for projects that are extensions of ongoing research should not be submitted. Investigators who were not selected for an award in prior years may submit applications this year; however, all applications must be submitted as "new" applications regardless of any previous submission to the program.

The award provides \$2.5 million in direct costs over five years. It is open to scientists at any career stage and who are located at an U.S. institution. Selected individuals are required to commit at least 51 percent of their research effort to the project. Applications consist of a three-five page essay and three letters of reference. For more information and/or to apply see <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pioneer>.

New Innovator Award

The New Innovator Award provides \$1.5 million in direct costs over five years. The program is open to early stage investigators who have not yet obtained an NIH investigator-initiated (R01) or similar grant, hold an independent research position at an U.S. institution, and received a doctoral degree or completed medical internship and residency within the past ten years. For the New Innovator Award, individuals are required to commit at least 25 percent of their research effort to the project. There is an electronic application which allows preliminary data but does not require it. For more information or to apply see <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/newinnovator>.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.
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NEW ADDRESS
1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1150
Washington, D.C. 20006
Phone: (202) 842-3525; Fax: (202) 842-2788

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