

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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## **BBS TASK FORCE REPORT RELEASED: SEPS DIRECTORATE KEY RECOMMENDATION *HS***

The National Science Foundation has finally released the report of the Biological, Behavioral and Social Science (BBS) Task Force "Looking to the Twenty-First Century." The 106 page report, entitled Adapting to the Future, contains the key recommendation:

**"The Task Force recommends that two distinct directorates be established to replace the present directorate of Biological, Behavioral, and Social Sciences. One of these is to be devoted to research in the biological sciences (BIO), and the other to the social, economic, and psychological sciences (SEPS)."**

The Task Force, composed of 12 biologists and eight scientists from the SEPS and chaired by Pete Magee, Dean of Biological Sciences at the University of Minnesota, convened in the fall of 1990 to discuss the future organization and structure of a BBS directorate that encompasses fields of science that, the chair notes in the preface to the report, "play an important role in formulating solutions to virtually every major problem facing humankind."

During its four meetings, including two days of open hearings where 55 professional and scientific organizations -- including COSSA -- presented testimony, the Task Force focused not only on the major item of reorganization into two directorates, but also on questions of scientific infrastructure, human resources, and ways to facilitate change in science.

The report does not detail the precise division of present programs between the two directorates, leaving that to future determination by NSF. It urges the widest possible formal consultation be undertaken to determine the division and program structure of the SEPS directorate. It notes: "However, such consultation should in no way delay the formation of the two proposed directorates."

The Task Force report suggests that "several areas are difficult to divide between the two

directorates," and the "productive relationships between such interdisciplinary areas (for example neurosciences, anthropology, and the study of animal behavior) should be carefully nurtured." The Task Force report also advocates moving programs in Language, Cognition, and Social Behavior, currently in the Behavioral and Neural Science Division, to the new SEPS directorate.

The decision to accept the separate directorate recommendation still rests with NSF Director Walter Massey. (See UPDATE September 9, 1991).

Other recommendations from the report focus on fostering interdisciplinary research, encouraging large-scale initiatives, facilitating collaborative research, improving funding procedures and policies, increasing the educational opportunities and supply of new scientists, and strengthening and promoting NSF's unique role in support of basic scientific research. The report concludes with a section highlighting possible future research foci during the next 10-20 years.

A list of Social, Economic, and Psychological scientists on the BBS Task Force is on page 6.

Copies of the report are available through the BBS Directorate at NSF, 1800 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20550.

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## SENATE APPROVES ELIMINATING FUNDING FOR TWO SURVEYS OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR JA

In a somewhat surprising, and very disappointing fashion, the Senate voted on September 12 to allow \$10 million that would have supported research on human sexual behavior at the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to be transferred instead to the Adolescent Family Life (AFL) program in the Department of Health and Human Services. While NICHD funds basic biomedical, social and behavioral research in all aspects of child health and human development, AFL primarily funds teen pregnancy prevention programs that promote an abstinence-only agenda, and supports no basic research.

The Senate vote was on an amendment, sponsored by Jesse Helms (R-NC), to the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill (H.R. 2707). Helms specifically was interested in eliminating funds budgeted by NICHD for the American Teenage Study and the Survey of Health and AIDS Risk Prevalence (SHARP), both national studies that include questions about sexual behavior as it relates to such public health issues as teen pregnancy, AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Funding for the American Teenage Study already had been cut in July by Secretary of Health and Human Services, Louis Sullivan, who took the unusual step of canceling an already approved and partially-funded grant (see Update, August 5, 1991).

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But funding for the SHARP study remained in the NICHD budget for FY 1992.

In introducing his amendment, Senator Helms explained that his opposition to funding surveys of human sexual behavior is based on his conviction that they are intended solely to "legitimize homosexual lifestyles." He argued that his amendment "presents a clear choice...between support for sexual restraint among our young people or, on the other hand, support for homosexuality and sexual decadence." Helms went further to cast aspersions on the integrity of the researchers involved in the SHARP study, and the NIH itself, claiming a wide conspiracy of "avidly prohomosexual members of the scientific community."

### Moynihan, Adams Defend Research

Senator Helms's amendment was strongly criticized by Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), one of the only members of the Senate with a professional social science background. Moynihan defended the integrity of the researchers involved in the two studies and the value of sample survey methodology in general. He explained that this kind of research is able to uncover unpredictable demographic trends, such as the rise of out-of-wedlock births and the "epidemic" of AIDS, by asking difficult questions.

Moynihan argued that by not asking such questions, we allow children's lives to go to ruin. "Never ask any embarrassing questions and let those little children suffer and die out there," he said. "They are dying every day in the streets of the cities, but do not find out about them because somebody might say, why did you ask that question?" Calling the Helms amendment "embarrassing," Moynihan said he couldn't believe it would be adopted.

Sen. Brock Adams (D-WA) also spoke out against the Helms amendment. He said it was "ridiculous" the Senate was debating the issue of whether it is appropriate for the federal government to fund surveys of sexual behavior when the U.S. faces "unprecedented rates" of teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS. "We can only combat these...health threats, with knowledge about what people do, why they engage in risky behavior, and what can potentially be done to prevent it."

Adams took issue with Helms's argument that to study sexual behavior is to encourage it, saying that "by now, we all know this is just plain bunk."

He noted that abstinence-only programs funded by the federal government over the past decade have been proven not to work. "There is no scientific evidence that abstinence-only programs reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy," he asserted. Arguing that it didn't make sense to continue funding programs that don't work, Adams said what we need instead is "solid, scientific behavioral and social research to complement the already advanced biomedical research of the NIH."

But Senators apparently were not convinced by the arguments of Moynihan and Adams. (Many were preoccupied with the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas.) By a vote of 34 to 66, they rejected a motion by Adams to table the Helms amendment, which effectively would kill it, and instead adopted the amendment by a voice vote. The entire Labor, HHS, Education appropriations bill subsequently passed 78 to 22.

What happened? Why weren't meritorious science and concern over public health issues able to triumph over anti-homosexual vitriol? It appears that senators faced with a choice of voting for a program that supports teenage sexual abstinence and spending tax dollars on "sex surveys" that ask "nasty" questions, chose abstinence. It was clear in watching the vote, that a majority of Senators confronted with the out-of-context questions flashed by Helms, discarded any notions of scientific integrity and chose to protect themselves from the possible political retributions of opposing Helms on a vote concerning sex.

Unlike the House of Representatives, where the anti-gay vitriol preached by Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-CA) is generally ignored, Senators are much more wary of opposing Senator Helms.

#### Future Senate Action Likely

The battle is not yet over. The issue of federal funding for research on human sexual behavior will be revisited in the NIH Reauthorization bill soon to come before the Senate. This battle will undoubtedly resemble that already fought in the House in July, in which supporters of the research were triumphant (see Update, August 5, 1991).

COSSA has also learned that funding has been delayed for another peer-reviewed approved grant at NICHD that would conduct a survey of sexual behavior. Could this be the start of a "chilling effect" on this kind of research?

## GAO REPORT CRITICAL OF USDA FOOD & NUTRITION SURVEY *MB*

A report released by the General Accounting Office sharply criticizes a Department of Agriculture food consumption study for being so scientifically flawed and mismanaged that its findings may be unusable.

The subject of the recent report, the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Nationwide Food Consumption Survey (NFCS), is a decennial study which is used to set government food policies, such as school lunch programs, and to determine pesticide tolerance levels in food. NFCS addresses two aspects of food consumption, household food use and individual food intake. The 1987-88 survey examined shifts in food use since the 1977-78 survey.

The GAO report found two major flaws resulting in questionable data: methodological problems in the survey design and lax management on the part of USDA "at times violating key internal controls," according to the report.

In discussing the methodological problems, the GAO said that in a 1977 report it noted that the considerable length of the NFCS questionnaire may have produced a burden on respondents which could lead to inaccurate findings. According to the GAO, no significant changes were made for the 1987-88 survey.

The 1987-88 survey, conducted by the marketing concern National Analysts, had a response rate of 34 percent, a fact the GAO blames on the burden the survey placed upon respondents. Household visits were unannounced, the initial interview took 3 hours in addition to 2 days of intake records, and respondents were paid only \$2 for their participation. No profile of non-respondents was ever compiled. The report also criticized the timeliness and accuracy of data collection.

#### GAO Cites Needed Steps

GAO recommended that USDA disclose the technical limitations of the \$7.6 million survey in all reports using NFCS data. In preparation for the 1997-98 NFCS, the GAO recommended that USDA create a plan to ensure that the survey's data will accurately represent the American population, and explicitly state the procedures to be followed so that future surveys do not replicate those mentioned in the GAO report. It also spelled out several con-

tract management reforms it would like USDA to take.

Rep. George E. Brown, Jr. (D-CA), chairman of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, had asked GAO to examine the NFCS, and called upon USDA to work to address the flaws cited by the GAO. "My goal... is not to belabor past mistakes, but to emphasize the need for positive action to achieve a more effective and scientifically valid national nutrition research and monitoring program for the future, consistent with the needs of the American people," Brown said.

## TWO SOCIAL SCIENTISTS HONORED AT WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY *MB*

Social scientists George A. Miller and Robert W. Kates were honored by President Bush as recipients of the National Medal of Science in a White House ceremony on September 16. The National Medal of Science is the nation's highest scientific honor bestowed by the United States. Miller and Kates were joined by 18 other scientists in having been nominated by the National Science Foundation to receive the award.

In presenting the awards, President Bush said, "The men and women we honor exemplify not simply the life of the mind, but the spirit of adventure and risk that accompanies the quest for advancement."

Miller, the James S. McDonnell Distinguished University Professor of Psychology Emeritus at Princeton University, was cited for "his innovative leadership in the scientific study of language and cognition, and for his commitment to improved education for literacy."

Kates is University Professor and Director of the Alan Shawn Feinstein World Hunger Program at Brown University. Kates was honored for "his fundamental contributions to the understanding of natural and man-made hazards, global environmental change, and the prevalence and persistence of world hunger."

## HOUSE PANEL ADOPTS CENSUS IMPROVEMENT BILL *MB*

The House Post Office Subcommittee on Census and Population, chaired by Rep. Tom

Sawyer (D-OH), unanimously approved on September 17 legislation authorizing the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to study improving the decennial census.

The bill, authored by Rep. Sawyer, would require the Secretary of Commerce to contract with NAS for a 3-year study to examine both traditional and future methods of census-taking. The Academy would be required to report back to the Commerce Department and Congress on specific recommendations as well as their cost-effectiveness.

The committee's action comes on the heels of widespread criticism of the 1990 census, with many experts estimating that 5 million Americans, mostly minorities, were not counted in the census. The House-passed version of the Fiscal Year 1992 Commerce, State, Justice, and Related Agencies appropriations bill contains \$1.5 million earmarked to fund such a study.

Specifically, the legislation (HR 3280) requires the NAS to address ways to improve the government's enumeration methods, explore alternative methods of data collection, and examine "the appropriateness of using sampling methods, in combination with basic data collection techniques... in the acquisition or refinement of population data."

Sawyer's bill now moves on to the full Post Office and Civil Service Committee, chaired by Rep. Bill Clay (D-MO). Senate approval for the NAS study is expected after the House completes its action.

## PCAST DISCUSSES OSTP'S AGENDA AND FUTURE *(A)*

The President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST) met on September 12 to discuss a report on "The OSTP (Office of Science and Technology Policy) Agenda," presented by William Wells, former Director of Public Policy at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), and now a professor at George Washington University. Wells served as a consultant to OSTP for 15 months.

PCAST is composed of twelve distinguished scientists from outside the government appointed by the President. The group is chaired by OSTP Director and Special Assistant to the President, Allan Bromley.

In discussing current OSTP activities, Wells noted the increasing importance of "integrating the human and social dimensions of a number of issues." He specifically referred to the appointment of Pierre Perrolle as an OSTP Assistant Director for the social sciences, and the importance of the social and behavioral sciences in discussions of global environmental change.

Wells declared that OSTP has made significant progress in recent years. It is addressing a much broader array of important issues with an expanded and revitalized staff and budget. The office also has strengthened its relationships with the rest of the Executive Office of the President, and other federal agencies. It has reestablished PCAST and rebuilt the Federal Coordinating Councils on Science, Engineering and Technology (FCCSET).

However, the major thrust of Wells' report indicates that OSTP is in danger of spreading itself too thin without sufficient resources to deal with all the demands placed upon it. Vast pressures exist for OSTP "to get involved in peripheral issues," Wells suggested. Most of these issues arise from the "proprietary interest" Congress takes in the Office. Often this collides with the fact that OSTP is officially a part of the Executive Office of the President.

Congress is particularly interested in FCCSET. These inter-agency committees have produced reports and spending recommendations on cross-cutting issues such as Global Change, High Performance Computing and Communications, and Science and Mathematics Education. Some agency heads and congressional committees feel that the FCCSET process omits them from key decisions. Congress is interested in obtaining documents, particularly interim reports, on the deliberations of the FCCSET committees. Congressional oversight hearings on OSTP and FCCSET are expected this fall.

Wells also would like to see OSTP develop the internal capability to conduct policy research and analysis, currently difficult because of the necessity to focus on "firefighting" activities. Even the ability of OSTP to "contract out" policy research is limited by budget constraints.

Of greatest interest to the members of PCAST was Wells' distress over conflict-of-interest limitations that present difficulties in OSTP's use of limited-period fellows and consultants and its ability to attract members of advisory panels. Panel

## NIH APPOINTS WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH DIRECTOR JA

Vivian W. Pinn, Chairwoman of the Pathology Department at Howard University, has been selected as the first Director of the newly-established Office of Research on Women's Health at the National Institutes on Health (NIH). Dr. Pinn is a renal specialist and former president of the National Medical Association. She also is the first black woman to chair an academic pathology department in the United States.

The Office of Research on Women's Health was established to address the problems of the lack of research on health conditions specific to or more prevalent among women, the absence of women in clinical trials, and the dearth of women conducting basic health research.

member John Mc Tague, a former OSTP director now a Vice-President with Ford Motor Company, likened these rules to the U.S. treating its own "citizens as enemies."

## RAVITCH TESTIFIES ON LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND COMPETITIVENESS MB

Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch, recently confirmed by the Senate to lead the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), gave her first Congressional testimony in that capacity.

Appearing on September 12 before the House Ways and Means Committee, chaired by Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-IL), Ravitch spoke of the link between improving education in America and increasing American economic competitiveness throughout the world. Rostenkowski's panel currently is conducting a series of hearings on the issue of competitiveness.

Ravitch, a former adjunct professor of history and education at Teachers College, Columbia University, addressed the nature of the skills and knowledge of the American workforce.

"Fundamental changes in our economy are placing increasing pressure on our educational system," she said. In addition to improving the quality of our nation's schools, Ravitch stated, "We should

also improve the ability of our current workforce to gain the skills and knowledge they need to do their jobs better."

Ravitch cited the belief held by many economists and business leaders that American firms are overly hierarchical, noting that restructuring would bring more responsibility to front-line workers.

"But such approaches place far greater demands on the skills of employees, and in turn, on the educational system. In addition to substantive knowledge many do not now possess, employees would need to have better problem-solving skills, show more individual initiative, know how to find and use relevant information, and have the ability to work well on a team," Ravitch told the committee.

In response to questions from committee members' on the role of research at the Department of Education, Ravitch said that research has "historically been the role of the Department of Education" but the department has, "never been adequately funded as a research agency." Ravitch specifically cited lack of discretionary research funding available to OERI.

When Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT) asked Ravitch about her research goals at OERI, Ravitch responded that, if given adequate funding, she "would like to put research into the hands of the people" through videos, brochures, and other informational programs.

## PEACE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES 1992 SOLICITED GRANTS *MB*

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) recently announced the 1992 cycle of its solicited grants competition. Themes for this year are Curriculum Development and Teacher Training in International Peace and Conflict Management and Peace, Conflict and Governance in Latin America.

For the peace and conflict management solicitation, the institute is inviting proposals for the development of educational materials and teacher training programs. Grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$100,000 will be offered for the creation of courses or modules in the social sciences and related fields. The Peace Institute is placing an emphasis on proposals that reach out of a college or university core and into junior and community colleges, high schools, and the general public.

Regarding the Latin America solicitation, USIP is interested in projects about that region that investigate patterns of conflict resolution and the movement of societies from violence to negotiation, demobilization of military forces, and social, economic, and democratic development. The institute is particularly interested in issues of civil-military relations, administration of justice and the rule of law, and international and regional organizations.

USIP encourages applications from non-profit organizations, official public institutions, and individuals. For further information and application materials, please call or write: Solicited Grant Projects, United States Institute of Peace, 1550 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005-1708, Phone (202) 457-1700.

Closing date for this grant cycle is January 1, 1992.

### SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENTISTS ON THE BBS TASK FORCE

Stephen Anderson, Cognitive Science Center, Johns Hopkins University

Richard Berk, Department of Sociology, UCLA

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Anne Krueger, Department of Economics, Duke University

Risa Palm, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon

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**SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT:** *ke***BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS**

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

**State Court Organization**

The purpose of this notice is to announce a public solicitation for the continuation of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) State Court Organization project. The project is designed to meet the need for a comprehensive and authoritative reference source on the structure and work practices of state appellate and trial courts.

The award for this project is to continue the ongoing process of collecting information about state court organizations. It is anticipated that the information collected will be essential to anyone needing detailed, authoritative information on the organization and operation of the nation's state courts.

**Application Procedure:** An original and four (4) copies of a full proposal must be submitted on SF 424(Revision 1988) including the Certified Assurances. Proposals must be accompanied by OJP Form 4061/3, Certification Regarding Drug Free Workplace and OJP Form 4061/2, Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters. Applicants must complete the certificate regarding lobbying and, if appropriate, complete and submit SF LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities. Proposals must include both narrative descriptions and a detailed budget.

**Budget:** Costs are estimated not to exceed \$60,000 for the initial 12-month period.

**Review Process:** Applications will be reviewed competitively by a BJS selected panel which will make recommendations to the Director, BJS. Final authority to enter into a cooperative agreement is reserved for the Director, BJS, who may, in his discretion, determine that none of the applications shall be funded. Applications will be evaluated on the overall extent to which they respond to criminal justice priorities, conform to the goals of the State Court Organization Program, and appear to be fiscally feasible and efficient.

**Deadlines:** Proposals must be postmarked on/before October 15, 1991, and mailed to:

Applications Coordinator  
Bureau of Justice Statistics  
Room 1144-B  
633 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20531

**Contact:** For further information contact:

Patrick A. Langan  
Chief, Adjudication Unit  
[202] 616-3490.

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Society for the Scientific Study of Sex  
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Southwestern Social Science Association  
Speech Communication Association  
The Institute for Management Sciences

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