

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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A NEW YEAR ARRIVES: RECESSION, ELECTION, AND LEFTOVERS *HS*

In the first issue of 1991, UPDATE noted the opening of the 102nd Congress amidst a war threat and recession reality. The Soviet Union still existed. As 1992 begins, the war in the Persian Gulf seems "a brief shining moment in time," while the recession persists, layoffs, store and plant closings command headlines, and the people of America seem anxious about the future. Presidential candidates and their surrogates roam through New Hampshire trying to provide hope for that future. President Bush has travelled through Asia trying to open up markets, and the Washington Post's best known reporters have spent a week trying to explain Vice-President Quayle. The Soviet Union is no more, and something called the Commonwealth of Independent States will compete in the upcoming Olympic Games.

Having faced the wrath of constituents fed-up with them and all politicians, members of Congress will probably look forward to getting back to work on January 22. Some members, mostly Democrats, hung around Washington during December and early January conducting hearings on the awful state of the economy; some strived to offer solutions to fix it. President Bush will offer his prescriptions in his State of the Union address scheduled for January 28.

The FY 1993 federal budget is due for release on February 3. There has been much talk about revising the Budget Enforcement Act to abolish the caps placed on three categories of spending: defense, international and domestic. This would allow funds to be moved from defense, where spending needs are viewed as diminished, to domestic areas, where spending needs are viewed as essential in an election year.

More Changes

A year ago there was no directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) at the National Science Foundation. In 1992, thanks to new NSF director Walter Massey and the persistence and persuasiveness of the SBE

community, it exists. The search for the first leader of that directorate is reaching its climax (see story on page 2).

A year ago there was no Assistant Director for Social Sciences in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Pierre Perrolle, whose appointment was announced last February with the release of the FY 1992 budget, has managed to make himself an important part of the OSTP staff, while maintaining excellent relations with the social and behavioral science community.

In 1991, no funding existed for the Markets, Trade and Policy component of the National Competitive Research Initiative Grants program at the Department of Agriculture. In 1992, \$4 million will be available, a modest sum, but a start. The Social Science research agenda for rural America may have found a home.

Diane Ravitch replaced Christopher Cross as Assistant Secretary for Education Research and Improvement in 1991. As the reauthorization of OERI transpires in 1992, the vision of the office Ravitch has outlined (see UPDATE December 9, 1991) and her ability to overcome years of negative perceptions of OERI on the Hill, will be put to the test.

Matilda Riley was honored by being named Senior Social Scientist at the National Institute on

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NIH REAUTHORIZATION, FATE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR STUDIES FACES NEW SESSION OF CONGRESS *JJA*

Congress adjourned for the winter holidays without settling the matter of reauthorization of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Although the House passed its bill last July, including an amendment supporting sexual behavior research at NIH, the Senate has yet to pass its version.

COSSA has been working with a number of other organizations to try to get language included in the Senate NIH reauthorization bill, similar to that adopted by the House, that specifically would direct the Secretary of HHS to conduct or support research on the public health implications of sexual behavior (including unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and AIDS). This language would be stronger than that in the House bill as it would direct the Secretary to conduct this research rather than merely allowing him or her to do so.

The Research Freedom Act

An alternative strategy has been introduced by Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee members who are interested in addressing other realms besides sexual behavior in which federal funding for research has been withheld by HHS for political reasons, including research on fetal tissue transplantation, in vitro fertilization (IVF), and needle exchange programs for injecting drug users. All of these research areas are currently prohibited by HHS from receiving federal funding on the grounds that they raise too many "ethical" concerns.

In an effort to address this issue, Senator Brock Adams (D-WA) introduced the Research Freedom Act (S. 1902), which now is slated for inclusion in the NIH reauthorization bill when it comes before the Labor committee. While S. 1902 was designed specifically to overturn the moratorium on fetal tissue transplantation research, it also includes more generic provisions about any research for which funding has been withheld on "ethical" grounds.

The legislation states that once a grant proposal has been peer reviewed and approved by NIH, the Secretary may not withhold funding on ethical grounds unless he or she convenes an Ethics Advisory Board (EAB) -- composed of outside experts -- to evaluate the ethical implications of the research, and unless a majority of the EAB recommends funding be withheld for ethical reasons.

If the Secretary chooses not to convene an EAB, or if a majority of the EAB does not find grounds for withholding funds, the proposal is considered approved for funding.

Advocates of this approach argue that this provision both would allow previously suspended surveys of sexual behavior to be reevaluated for funding, and would remove the current "chill" on this kind of research. Others argue that more directive language specific to surveys of sexual behavior is needed in order for Congress to send a strong message to HHS and the NIH that this is a desired area of the federal research enterprise, and to thaw the current "chill." This debate, in which COSSA remains an active participant, will continue as Congress reconvenes January 22. It is expected that the NIH bill will not come before the Labor committee until early spring.

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE, COMMERCE DEPARTMENT CLASH OVER CENSUS DATA *MB*

Despite being issued a subpoena, Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher declined to appear at a December 10 meeting of the House Post Office and Civil Service Subcommittee on Census and Population to explain his refusal to turn over revised census data, resulting in a heated confrontation between Subcommittee chair Thomas Sawyer (D-OH) and a Mosbacher deputy.

In November, Sawyer's panel voted along party lines to issue a subpoena requiring Mosbacher to release the complete set of data from the Post-Enumeration Survey (PES), which was used to adjust the figures of the 1990 census, estimated to have undercounted the nation's population by over 5 million. Throughout this protracted battle, Sawyer has contended that the PES data, which Mosbacher decided in July would not be used for representational apportionment, are needed for research on ways to improve the 2000 census, while Mosbacher has argued that the data are too statistically inaccurate to be released and would interfere with the Congressional redistricting process.

A visibly angry Sawyer said that Mosbacher had "put himself above the law," and that the empty witness chair in the Cannon House Office Building hearing room was a "reflection of how removed the Commerce Department has become" regarding the

quality of the census. Sawyer said that ongoing efforts by the National Academy of Science and advisory groups to the Census Bureau to improve methodology for the next census would be adversely affected by not having access to PES data. He said that by citing redistricting, Mosbacher has made the issue a political one, adding that redistricting is a matter left up to the individual states. According to Sawyer, there is no statutory authority for an agency to refuse to release data on the grounds that they are statistically flawed.

At this point in the proceedings, Michael Darby, Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, came forward and asked to be allowed to address the committee. Reading from a prepared statement, Darby disagreed with Sawyer's contention that the subpoena specifically required Mosbacher's presence at the hearing. Darby said that the Commerce Department would release half of the PES data, that which contains data for areas of 1000 people or more, but would not release the block-level data the committee asked for in its subpoena. The block-level data are believed to be more statistically flawed. Darby noted that Sawyer had agreed to the release of 50 percent earlier in the fall, but when ordering the subpoena asked for the full data set.

Darby was sharply critical of the need for complete release of the PES data, saying "It would be irresponsible for the Department to release numbers known to be biased and less accurate than the census, particularly in the midst of the contentious and litigious redistricting process that is underway." Darby contended that the block-level figures are not needed for research, and that their only use would be for redistricting. He concluded, "release of a second set of data, which we know to be flawed, would only confuse the public, distort the redistricting process, and inevitably embroil our experts in more litigation."

Compromise Reached Weeks Later

Since the December 10 confrontation between Sawyer and the Commerce Department, much has changed. On January 9, after several weeks of deliberation, Sawyer accepted Mosbacher's release of 50 percent of the PES data. Sawyer will conduct a hearing in late January, featuring Burton Singer of the National Academy of Sciences, to examine ways to improve the census. At the Department of Commerce, Darby has resigned to return to academia, and Mosbacher has resigned to become general chairman of President Bush's re-election committee. The president recently nominated

Barbara Franklin, a management consultant and Republican fund-raiser, to replace Mosbacher. Franklin has yet to comment publicly on the issue.

REPORT SAYS HUMAN ASPECTS OF GLOBAL CHANGE GIVEN SCANT ATTENTION *MB*

A recently released report by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) says that the social science aspects of global environmental change have been given scant attention in the federal research agenda, and the report recommends the development of a "comprehensive national research program on the human dimensions of global change."

The report Global Environmental Change: Understanding the Human Dimensions was prepared by the Committee on the Human Dimensions of Global Change, part of the Commission on the Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (CBASSE) of NAS.

In contending that issues of human behavior must be more closely examined to better understand global change, committee chair Oran R. Young, director of Dartmouth College's Institute of Arctic Studies, said that the report should help "build a solid foundation under human dimensions research as a coherent intellectual enterprise and legitimate field of study."

The NAS report examines forces such as population growth, economic growth, and technological change and their influence on the human activities affecting climate change. The report calls for greater interdisciplinary research to examine the linkages between them. The committee also called for close collaboration between the social sciences and the natural sciences. It suggested three areas of study: human causes of global change, human responses and consequences, and theories and methods of study.

Thomas Deitz of the Human Ecology Research Group at George Mason University, and a member of the study panel, commented on what he termed "an almost perfect mismatch" between the federal agencies with strong global change capabilities -- Department of Energy, EPA, USDA, and NASA -- and agencies with relatively strong social science capabilities -- the National Institutes of Health, the

Census Bureau, and the Departments of Education and Labor. Deitz observed, "social sciences are not well integrated into the science policy process at most of the lead agencies for global change research." The only exception, he noted, is the National Science Foundation's global change research program.

On January 15, COSSA Executive Director Howard J. Silver will testify before the Committee on Environmental Research at NAS on the role social science can play in environmental research. The committee's public forum will also include testimony from representatives of the Association of American Geographers, the American Anthropological Association, and the American Sociological Association. Copies of the NAS report may be obtained by calling (202) 334-2138.

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE HEARS ECONOMIC FORECAST *MB*

House Budget Committee chairman Leon Panetta (D-CA) began a series of hearings on the state of the economy by inviting economist Robert Reischauer, Director of the Congressional Budget Office, before the Budget Committee to offer his analysis of the current recession and what to do about it.

Panetta's hearings, held the week of December 10, were held to assess the short- and long-term health of the economy, and to set the stage for Congressional debate over proposals to stimulate economic growth. Panetta expressed his belief that the economy is "in a sort of limbo, with neither growth nor contraction" and added that he is skeptical of short-term fixes for the economy.

Reischauer began his remarks by saying that while some economists see glimmers of recovery, for many Americans such speculation is "little more than an exercise in semantics." He said that the economy is weaker than most forecasters had predicted, and that the current forecasts of most economists are "tinged with pessimism," with even those experts seeing signs of economic growth fearing that it would be short-lived, producing a "double dip" recession. The recovery some economists see, Reischauer said, is likely to occur at a growth rate half that of earlier economic recoveries. This slow rate of growth, he stated, is likely to keep unemployment figures over 6.5 percent throughout 1992.

Reischauer blamed the anticipated weak recovery on a coincidence of several factors. First, he said that the commercial real estate boom of the 1980s has led to an overabundance of commercial property, and therefore, a lack of new construction. Second, he said that state, local, and federal fiscal policies in recent years have raised taxes and cut spending. Third, economic difficulties are affecting our trading partners as well, particularly Canada. A final factor Reischauer cited was the pressures on American businesses to cut costs and improve competitiveness, often resulting in layoffs.

Reischauer did not make any specific recommendations on initiatives to stimulate the economy, rather he attempted to explain "the trade-offs that may arise between short-term stimulus and established long-term goals of economic policy." He noted that reducing the size of the budget deficit has been a major goal of budget makers for over a decade, and that short-term economic fixes which increase the size of the deficit could hinder long-term prospects for economic growth. He noted that "budget measures are most apt to stimulate short-term expansion if they increase the deficit significantly and put cash in people's hands fairly quickly," but that the tax increases or cuts in spending in other areas which might accompany such a move could create counter-productive outcomes.

Reischauer concluded by commenting that while economic theory might caution against short-term measures, other factors -- an election year, for example -- may convince Congress to take action when it reconvenes in late January.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is the first issue of UPDATE for 1992. UPDATE, published bi-weekly, is written and produced by the COSSA staff and covers federal policies and debates relevant to social and behavioral scientists.

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SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH*KC*

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.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announces the availability of a Request for Applications (RFA) for cooperative agreements to develop, implement, and evaluate a coordinated program of community-based health behavior interventions to lower the unacceptably high rates of morbidity and mortality among minority youth. Applications responsive to this RFA must include, but are not limited to, strategies for decreasing violence-related injuries and deaths, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted or unintended pregnancies.

Eligible Applicants: Applications may be submitted by domestic for-profit and non-profit, public and private organizations, such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, units of state and local governments, and eligible agencies of the federal government. Applications from minority individuals and women are encouraged.

Budget: It is anticipated that up to eight awards will be made under this RFA for a total of approximately \$5 million (including direct and indirect costs) during the first program year.

Mechanism of Support: This RFA will use the NIH cooperative agreement mechanism (U01). Under its terms, the awardee defines the details of the project within the guidelines of the RFA, retains primary responsibility for implementation, data collection, analysis and interpretation, preparation of publication, and collaboration with other awardees. The awardee also agrees to accept assistance, close coordination and participation of the Social, Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch, NICHD Project Coordinator working with the project in all aspects of the scientific and technical management. The anticipated award date will be November 1, 1992.

Review Process: Specific details on review criteria are outlined in the RFA.

Deadline: Letter of intent is due February 1, 1992, and is to include a descriptive title of the proposed research, the name, address and telephone number of the Principal Investigator, other key personnel, and the number and title of the RFA in response to which the application is submitted. It is to be sent to: Susan Newcomer, Ph.D., Office of Minority Programs Project Coordinator, NICHD, Executive Plaza North, Room 611, Bethesda, MD 20892, (301) 496-1174. Receipt of application is due on or before May 15, 1992.

Contact: Direct inquiries to: Melinda Nelson, Office of Grants and Contracts, NICHD, Executive Plaza North, Room 505, Bethesda, MD 20892, (301) 496-5481.

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