Consortium of Social Science Associations

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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WHITE HOUSE AND GOP REACH BUDGET AGREEMENT

On May 2, the Clinton administration and the Republican leadership in Congress agreed on an outline to balance the federal budget by 2002. Both sides concurred in how much should be cut from entitlements, discretionary spending, and taxes. What they did not agree on were the details that will still need decisions by Congress' tax and appropriating committees. Despite the deal, the regular process of producing a budget resolution, allocating funds among the 13 appropriating subcommittees in both the House and Senate, and jockeying for funds among competing interests will continue throughout the year. The difference is that the broad parameters and constraints within which these budget games will play out are set.

The negotiators received enormous help from new calculations from the Congressional Budget Office. CBO projected strong economic growth that will produce a deficit in the next five year $225 billion less than anticipated. This provided the wiggle room for President Clinton to insist on larger amounts of spending, particularly on education. It also allowed the Republicans to insist on larger amounts of tax cuts than the administration originally wanted. The new deficit numbers also allowed negotiators to remove plans for revising the Consumer Price Index. Despite a commission's call to fix the CPI's overstatement of inflation (see *Update*, February 10), the agreement simply phases in already assumed adjustments based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics long-term revision study.

The numbers for domestic discretionary spending, which includes all the agencies that provide funding for research except the Department of Defense, are unclear as *Update* goes to press.

Supplemental Mischief Threatens Census

An $8.4 billion supplemental FY 1997 appropriations bill to provide emergency relief for flood victims in the Midwest, peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, and other areas has drawn several non-germaine riders.

One would prohibit the Census Bureau from using any funds to "plan or otherwise prepare for the use of sampling in taking the 2000 decennial census." Inserted into the Senate bill by the chamber's Republican leaders, the language would not only ban the Census Bureau's use of statistical sampling for non-response follow-up and reducing the differential undercount, but it would also eliminate the census long form, which is sent to one in six households. The long form provides a wide range of demographic, housing, and socioeconomic data to administer Federal programs.

An amendment by Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) to eliminate the rider was defeated 13-15 by the Senate Appropriations Committee on a primarily party-line vote. Office of Management and Budget Director Franklin Raines has written the Senate to say that the sampling prohibition's presence in the final version bill would produce a presidential veto. Action by the full Senate is expected during the week of May 5. COSSA and its allies in the data user community are working in opposition to the bill's provision.

INSIDE UPDATE...

- NSF Reauthorization Bill Passes House
- Senate Chair Stresses Accountability at NSF Hearing
- Lane Tells Advisory Committee All Quiet on SBE Front
- COSSA and Others Support 7.1 Percent Increase for NSF
- Coalition Holds Third Exhibition of NSF Results
- Science Chair Addresses Colloquium
- Hearing Examines NIH Research Priorities
- Sources of Research Support: National Institutes of Health

NSF REAUTHORIZATION BILL PASSES HOUSE

The National Science Foundation authorization bill, H.R. 1273, passed the House of Representatives on April 24 by voice vote. The bill provides for a 7.2 percent increase to $3.505 billion in the authorized levels for FY 1998, and a 3 percent increase for FY 1999. The legislation now goes to the Senate. NSF has not had an authorization since 1993.

The only controversy on the House floor came on a successful amendment sponsored by Rep. Tom Coburn (R-OK) to prohibit NSF from spending any funds to support research that is part of the Man and the Biosphere program. In FY 1997 NSF's Biology directorate transferred $50,000 to the State Department for projects related to this United Nation's-sponsored program to investigate the environment. Coburn attacked the program for its UN auspices, the lack of an authorization by the U.S. Congress to spend the money, and that it "violates the very spirit of freedom and control of personal property rights that our citizens enjoy."

Rep. George Brown (D-CA) and Rep. James Barcia (D-MI) defended the program. They both noted that this was a research program whose grants are peer reviewed. It is not a program to take land away from people. Their arguments did not move a House that seemed more interested in bashing the U.N., and Coburn's amendment passed by voice vote.

The prospect for the authorization bill depends on whether the two Senate committees with jurisdiction over NSF can find time to put the legislation on track. During the past two years, neither the Labor and Human Resources Committee nor the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, busy with other issues, evinced much interest in NSF. With new leadership, Sen. James Jeffords (R-VT), Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN), these committees may take up the NSF legislation in the near future. Frist, chair of the Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee, has already scheduled a hearing for May 7.

SENATE CHAIR STRESSES ACCOUNTABILITY AT NSF HEARING

Sen. Christopher 'Kit' Bond (R-MO), told the National Science Foundation that explaining scientific progress with specific examples and results is the key to success in convincing Congress to support future spending increases. NSF Director Neal Lane and White House Science Adviser and Office of Science and Technology Policy head Jack Gibbons appeared before the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Bond, on April 22 in the annual ritual to discuss their FY 1998 budgets.

Much of the discussion focused on measuring scientific success. The coming implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) will force agencies to develop strategic plans with specific goals to be met. GPRA also requires Performance Plans that will provide indicators to determine if those goals are accomplished. For scientific agencies funding basic research, generating these assessments has proven a difficult assignment. In the past, these agencies have measured inputs — number of grants proposed, number of grants awarded, average size of grants. Now it is time to measure outputs — what were the results of these grants? Did these agencies simply "throw the dollars out and hope something comes about 20 years later," as Bond wondered.

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Executive Director:	Howard J. Silver
Public Affairs:	Michael Buckley
Government Affairs:	Angela L. Sharpe
Administrative Officer:	Karen Carrion
President:	Eleanor Maccoby

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences. *Update* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for $65; institutional subscriptions, $130, overseas mail, $130. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA, 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

Lane noted that NSF is currently working on producing the plans necessary for GPRA's implementation. There is also much ongoing work to produce metrics to assess the Foundation's efforts. Yet, Lane conceded that "the merit review process will still play a large role in evaluating these investments." He also noted that quantitative measures "were not likely to be helpful," and that qualitative measures, using examples, might have to suffice.

Bond asked Lane why the Foundation has stressed *Knowledge and Distributed Intelligence* (KDI) and *Life in Earth's Environments* (LEE) as key initiatives in the proposed FY 1998 budget. Lane noted that these research areas arose from the scientific community concerned with the environment in a broad sense for LEE, and the commonality of interests in the new information technology for KDI. Acting Deputy Director Joe Bordogna noted the current support for research on Learning and Intelligent Systems, a KDI component, that will help people work smarter, change paradigms about education, and integrate the knowledge base for broader purposes. The Chairman continued to stress the notion of setting markers and returning next year to see what progress has been made.

LANE TELLS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ALL QUIET ON THE SBE FRONT

Neal Lane met with the Advisory Committee to NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) on May 1. In a wide-ranging discussion, the NSF Director assured the committee that the political climate that challenged the directorate's existence in 1995-96 has quieted down for now. He noted the recent questions raised about the Education and Human Resources Directorate and the upcoming oversight hearings with regard to its programs (see *Update*, April 21).

Lane did warn the committee that he expects that "all these questions [raised about SBE during the past two years] will come back again." He noted that since much of SBE supported research focuses on people and how they behave and think, there are people in the Congress and elsewhere who believe they already understand human behavior. Therefore, they conclude there is no need for research and what research there is remains subjective and unscientific. To respond to this, SBE researchers should be clear about their priorities, set high standards, and ensure that peer review remains a cornerstone of decisions about support, Lane stated.

Reflecting on some other issues, the Director noted the strong role SBE played in the White House sponsored-Children's Initiative. He cited former NSF Deputy Director Anne Petersen, former SBE Assistant Director Cora Marrett, and current SBE Assistant Director Bennett Bertenthal, as key players in the development and implementation of this effort. Bertenthal, in his remarks to the Advisory Committee, noted that SBE would be pushing research related to this initiative in its FY 1999 budget submission, which is now under preparation. Lane stressed the need to make the connections between the knowledge base in this area and the policies necessary to provide the outcomes the research suggests are important for child development.

Lane also focused on the tensions between people versus physical infrastructure in providing NSF resources to the sciences and scientists. Responding to Advisory Committee Chair Jacquelynne Eccles, a University of Michigan psychologist, Lane acknowledged that sometimes adequate attention is not given to SBE's infrastructure needs. Eccles noted that SBE does have these needs, particularly with regard to database development and large equipment to conduct experimental economics and developmental psychology research.

Speaking about international issues, Lane struck a pessimistic note. He worried about the U.S. losing its lead in some areas of science. For instance, he said if present trends continue, the "only place we could find our infrastructure will be overseas," and that without government intervention "we won't be able to provide resources to our scientists." He suggested there are "tough times ahead" in this arena.

The Advisory Committee will have a new Chair at its next meeting in the fall. Jane Maienschein of Arizona State University will take over then.

Maienschein, who is a philosopher of science, is also currently serving as Senior Science Advisor to Rep. Matt Salmon (R-AZ) in a new Arizona State program to place senior faculty in congressional offices.

COSSA AND OTHERS SUPPORT 7.1 INCREASE FOR NSF

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) has expressed its support for a 7.1 percent increase for the National Science Foundation's FY 1998 appropriation. This $232 million increase would bring NSF's total budget to $3.502 million. On May 1, COSSA Executive Director and CNSF Chair, Howard J. Silver, joined a number of others in testifying to the House VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. The testimony reflected a determination by the science community to speak with one voice on this matter.

Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), chairing the session, spoke enthusiastically about the CNSF exhibition held the night before *(see accompanying story)*. Frelinghuysen expressed his belief that more of his colleagues should attend subsequent displays of the results of NSF research. Silver told the Subcommittee that the 7.1 percent increase "would allow NSF to support more excellent research projects to pursue important new discoveries, and enhance the scientific literacy of the nation' students and general population." He declared that the 7.1 percent increase would provide NSF with real growth after three years of erosion of NSF's budget to inflation.

Silver also focused on the Social, Behavioral and Economic Science Directorate. He thanked the Subcommittee for resisting the efforts of the former chairman of the House Science Committee to eliminate the directorate and "return these disciplines to second-class status at NSF." He noted National Science Board Chairman Richard Zare's supportive editorial in *Chemical and Engineering News*, in which he said, "I'm wondering whether some problems that are limiting society's benefit from advances in the physical sciences might not be answered by the social and behavioral sciences." Silver also called for continued support for the large historical social science data collections such as the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, the General Social Survey, and the National Elections Studies, referring to them as the "infrastructure of the social sciences." He indicated SBE's role in the new Knowledge and Distributed Intelligence Initiative, especially the Learning and Intelligent Systems component, the continued support for the Human Capital Initiative, and the SBE funded centers on violence, geographic information, human dimensions of global change, and environmental decision making.

Following his testimony, Rep. David Price (D-NC), who also attended the CNSF exhibition, congratulated Silver for his leadership of that organization. Price, a political scientist, also expressed his appreciation, for Silver's longtime advocacy on behalf of the social and behavioral sciences through his stewardship of COSSA.

COALITION HOLDS THIRD EXHIBITION OF NSF RESULTS

The Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) held its third annual exhibition and reception on April 30. The purpose of the event is to display the results of NSF supported research to members of Congress and their staffs. This year 14 members and over 100 staff people examined 34 displays and talked with researchers, graduate students, and undergraduate students who explained their research.

The social and behavioral sciences were well represented. Exhibits included: *Seeing Motion: The Eyes Have It (But They Aren't Always Right)* presented by Karen and Russell De Valois of the University of California at Berkeley on behalf of the American Psychological Association; *Immigration and the Changing Face of America's Suburbs* presented by John Logan of the State University of New York at Albany presented by the American Sociological Association; *The National Election Studies: A National Resource in the Social Sciences* presented by Larry Bartels of Princeton University on behalf of the American Political Science Association; and *Documenting the Emergence of a Language: Issues of Critical Period, Critical Mass, and Innate Language Capacity* presented by Judy Kegl of

Rutgers University on behalf of the Linguistic Society of America.

CNSF is an ad-hoc advocacy group consisting of almost 80 groups representing the physical, natural, social and behavioral sciences, mathematics, engineering, higher education, universities, and the industrial world. Howard J. Silver, COSSA's Executive Director, serves as its current chair.

SCIENCE COMMITTEE CHAIR ADDRESSES COLLOQUIUM

"Federal research and development must focus on essential programs that are long-term, high risk, well-managed and have a great potential for scientific discovery," said House Science Committee Chairman Rep. F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), enumerating his "principles to guide the Committee through its budget and oversight responsibilities." The second principle, said Sensenbrenner, appearing at the 1997 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Colloquium on Science and Technology Policy, is that "federal research and development needs to be highly relevant and tightly focused on agency missions, with accountability and procedures for evaluating quality and results."

Applauding the fact that the Science Committee was the first to report all of its authorization bills, "in record time . . . and in a true spirit of bipartisanship," Sensenbrenner noted that the policies and funding levels in the Committee-passed bills "reflect the Committee's recognition that new knowledge is essential to our nation's viability." H.R. 1273, the National Science Foundation Authorization Act, passed by the House on April 24th, emphasizes, said Sensenbrenner, "my commitment to support fundamental research, science and engineering education by authorizing a 7 percent increase over 1997 funding levels." This level of funding, he continued, "could provide an additional 1,000 grants."

Sensenbrenner indicated that he has begun to work with Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), Chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN) Chairman of the Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space, "to ensure that the legislation passed by the House is handled by the Senate."

"We will also begin to take a serious look at agencies' agendas and goals," observed Sensenbrenner, citing the adoption of "a comprehensive oversight plan" as an example of the Committee's determination. The plan, he said, lists 89 topics under five different categories over which the Science Committee will be conducting oversight, ranging from review of international science agreements; domestic science, math and engineering programs; procurement and management issues; laboratory funding; peer review; and High Energy and Nuclear physics.

Sensenbrenner noted that the Government and Performance and Results Act (GPRA) passed in the 103rd Congress provides "an effective oversight tool for the Science Committee to reexamine the value and effectiveness of science programs and legislate the necessary corrective measures to these programs." GPRA, said Sensenbrenner, "provides a legislative vehicle for agencies to use as they seek to demonstrate and improve their effectiveness because agencies must set strategic and annual goals, measure performances, and report on whether those goals are met." He noted his disappointment in "the agencies lack of response to a joint letter" he and Ranking Member George Brown (D-CA) signed, requesting copies of their strategic plans.

HEARING EXAMINES NIH RESEARCH PRIORITIES

"One of the federal government's primary duties is to ensure a healthy national enterprise by promoting progress and innovation in science and technology . . . it is clear that our federal programs must invest in long-term biomedical research as a public good," said Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN), chairman of the Subcommittee on Public Health and Safety, before a hearing on establishing biomedical research priorities. The hearing entitled, *Biomedical Research Priorities: Who Should Decide*, is an opportunity, said Frist, " to engage in a thoughtful discussion about the subcommittee's role in developing a strategy for federal biomedical research through authorizing legislation." Noting that the hearing was

preliminary work for drafting a NIH reauthorization bill, he emphasized, that "while we have a responsibility as legislators to participate in the overall strategy and process for setting research priorities, we must take time to think through the consequences of congressional intervention in determining what those priorities ought to be."

Emphasizing that there is "no consensus" regarding the best way to distribute federal funds, Frist noted that "one of the strengths of our system is the freedom of each constituency to make its most compelling case for greater attention and greater resources . . . The scientific community must continue to base funding decisions on the scientific areas ripe for opportunity, the overall need for basic research, and the ability to respond to emerging public health problems," he said.

"Research can lead to substantial reduction in health care expenditures," emphasized Ranking Member Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) citing the recently released Duke University study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* which revealed a decline in chronic disability rates among older Americans. (See *Update*, March 25). Acknowledging that the setting of priorities is a complex process which deserves the input of advocates, Kennedy said the final direction should be left to NIH. However, he noted that as in the past when there are areas of research (women, children, minorities, and the elderly), where the NIH does not act, there is a role for Congress.

NIH Director Harold Varmus related "ten brief observations" -- based on historical facts, operating principles, and personal experience -- to help explain how NIH manages its budget and to answer the underlying questions: What kinds of decisions must be made? Who makes those decisions? What factors are considered in making them? How reliable are the decisions? How do we evaluate them and make appropriate adjustments? Varmus explained:

1) Resource allocation is not a single issue; many decisions must be made during the complex process of deciding how the NIH will spend its money. The net effect of these multiple processes and decisions will determine how much of the entire NIH budget is devoted to work in certain scientific disciplines or certain diseases.

2) The entire budget cannot be subjected to unfettered realignment each year; the enduring impact of past decisions and the need to provide stable support for scientific work restrict the funds that can be directed.

3) There are legitimate limits to our ability to plan science -- it is inherently unpredictable. Overall, the institutes and centers cannot and should not provide precise plans for their entire research portfolios.

4) Many criteria guide the development and expenditure of the NIH budget. Factors that affect resource allocation at NIH include: an obligation to respond to public health needs; a commitment to support work of the highest scientific caliber; a responsibility to seize the scientific opportunities that offer the best prospects for new knowledge and better health; a need to maintain a diverse portfolio that supports work in many scientific disciplines on a wide range of diseases; and an obligation to insure a strong scientific infrastructure.

5) To evaluate these many criteria for making decisions, the NIH requires and seeks input from many sources -- the extramural scientific community, patient advocacy groups, Congress and the Administration, and the NIH staff. Despite these many means of gathering opinions and evaluating them, assembling each ICD's research portfolio is a difficult and imperfect process.

6) Assessing or designing a research portfolio from numbers alone is a hazardous enterprise. Coding of funds by disease category across the NIH, though useful for some purposes, is also inherently imprecise.

7) Scientific work is not a commodity that can be purchased; hence the effective shifting of priorities requires more than budgetary realignments.

8) A decision to increase support for one area of medical science now usually constrains the support of something else.

9) Existing methods for resource allocation at the NIH are preferable to Congressional directives.

Requests for increased funding for specific institutes and centers are based on proposals that aim to exploit recent discoveries; encourage studies of diseases that have been relatively neglected, poorly controlled, or recently made more accessible to scientific study; or strengthen research technologies, such as computer science, imaging devices, neuroscience, or gene mapping, applicable to a broad range of disciplines and diseases.

10) Many novel and powerful means are available, and should be used, to heighten the interest of scientists in the public benefits of their research.

Kenneth Shine, President of the Institute of Medicine declared that prevention research should have a very high priority. Similarly, Shine wrote in testimony, "when we recognize that 50 percent of health care expenditures in the U.S. are related illnesses that are strongly influenced by unhealthful behaviors, e.g., substance abuse, smoking, improper diet, inappropriate sexual behavior, speeding, violence, etc., there is a substantial burden of disease that may be affected by successful research on behavior and behavioral change."

With regard to priority setting, Shine argued that there are no more important criteria for investment than the scientific opportunities in a particular field. Scientific opportunities include not only the content of the emerging science, but also the talent pool that is available and the quality of the ideas being put forward. He also advocated, given the budget for biomedical research, there should be some ongoing research program in every field and in relation to every disease entity. Two important consequences would result: there are investigators who may recognize the manner in which advances made in other fields may be applicable to their field and research in a very unusual or rare disorder may provide insight that has much broader ramifications.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

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.

The Behavioral and Social Research Program

The Behavioral and Social Research Program (BSR) of the National Institute on Aging (NIA) is seeking small grant (RO3) applications to stimulate and facilitate research in underdeveloped topics in the behavioral and social sciences of aging.

Research Objectives: The Small Grant program is designed to support new, junior, and established behavioral and social science researchers interested in conducting research on underdeveloped topics in the behavioral and social sciences of aging. Topics of interest are limited to the following eight topics: *1.* Social Cognition in Adulthood and Old Age; *2.* Personality in Adulthood and Old Age; *3.* Behavior Genetics and Aging; *4.* Interventions to Enhance Self Care in Older People; *5.* Religiousness in Health and Aging; *6.* AIDS in an Aging Society; *7.* Social and Structural Factors in Health Care; *8.* Aging and Work Organizations

Budget: In fiscal year 1997, approximately $500,000 will be available to fund 7 to 10 small grants, contingent on high scientific merit and program priority.

Application Receipt Dates: July 17, November 17.

Contact: Direct programmatic inquiries to: Dr. Marcia Ory, Social Science Research on Aging, National Institute on Aging, Gateway Building, Room 533, Bethesda, MD 20892-9205, (301) 402-4156, e-mail: Marcia_Ory@NIH.GOV

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CONTRIBUTORS

American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
University of Arizona
Bowling Green State University
Brookings Institution
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Los Angeles
University of California, San Diego
University of California, Santa Barbara
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Consortium of Social Science Associations
1522 K Street, N.W., Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005