

CONGRESS RESUMES WORK: NSF CUT \$10 MILLION MORE IN HOUSE

HS

Congress returned to Washington on September 8 faced with a new Fiscal Year (FY) only 23 days away and an appropriations process mired in spending cap induced difficulties. With the President poised to veto the tax-cut bill Congress passed earlier in the year and the limitations on spending produced by the 1997 budget agreement still in place, there is endless speculation on end-game scenarios. For the moment, neither the White House nor the Congress appears ready to compromise.

Only two of the 13 FY 2000 spending bills have reached the President's desk. The other 11 are in various stages of the process. The most difficult bill, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriation has yet to receive a mark-up in either the House or Senate subcommittees. Many of the bills further along in the process are threatened with presidential vetoes, including the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies bill, which funds the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the Commerce, Justice, State bill, which funds the Census Bureau and the Department of Justice's research and statistics agencies. As the new Fiscal Year looms and the appropriations process stalls, preparations are already underway for a (or a series of) Continuing Resolution(s) to allow the government to function.

VA, HUD Bill Passes the House

The House did manage to pass its 12th appropriation bill on September 9, when it gave approval to the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies legislation, by a vote of 235-187. The bill is riddled with difficulties. The Americorps program, a favorite of the President, is zeroed out. NASA is cut by \$1 billion. The Democrats claim there is not enough funding for Veterans' Medical Care. Housing program advocates are upset with the level of funding for HUD. EPA is also cut.

The National Science Foundation, already reduced by the House Appropriations Committee by \$26 million from last year's appropriated level, lost

another \$10 million during the full House consideration. Representatives Jerry Nadler (D-NY), John Crowley (D-NY) and Christopher Shays (R-CT) offered an amendment, that was accepted, to increase funding for the Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS program by \$10 million. Under the zero-sum game of federal budgeting, they needed to provide an offset. They took the money from NSF's Antarctica program. This means that the \$8.5 million increase recommended by the appropriations committee for the Research and Related Activities account, which includes the Antarctica program, is gone.

During the debate, Representative Vern Ehlers (R-MI) proposed an amendment to increase NSF's FY 2000 funding by \$240 million. His offset was to decrease all other accounts in the appropriations bill by 3.5 percent. Realizing that he would not garner the support of a majority of his colleagues for this trade-off, Ehlers withdrew his amendment. However, he did conduct a colloquy (conversation) with VA, HUD, IA Subcommittee Chair Representative James Walsh (R-NY). Walsh noted that NSF is "a high priority," and that "if there is any way as we go through the process that we can provide some additional funds for NSF we will ..."

Along with Walsh and Ehlers, everyone recognizes this bill is a long way from final passage.

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The Senate Subcommittee has still not scheduled a mark-up date. Most likely, this bill will wind up as part of a grand negotiation between the President and Congress, or in a Continuing Resolution, that might simply fund all the agencies at last year's levels.

ADMINISTRATION CRITICIZES CONGRESS ON CUTS IN R&D FUNDING

The Clinton Administration "is deeply concerned that the Republican-led Congress — particularly the House — is proposing to make deep cuts in our funding for research and development," according to White House Chief of Staff John Podesta. He made the comments at a September 1 press conference and declared that House and Senate leaders are proposing risky tax and budget cuts that will guarantee that federal funding of research and development (R&D) is slashed in the future. "This is the wrong direction for our country," Podesta continued, asking "whether this Congress would have zeroed out [President Thomas] Jefferson's request for the Lewis and Clark Expedition?"

A 19th Century Budget for the 21st Century

"America's leadership in science and technology has been a cornerstone of the Clinton Administration." The Clinton Administration has

proposed increases in civilian R&D in each of its proposed budgets during the last seven years, noted Podesta. The House, according to the Chief of Staff, would:

- cut \$1.8 billion from the President's request for civilian R&D funding, an 8-10 percent reduction;
- eliminate a proposed \$200 million increase in funding for the National Science Foundation;
- slash the funding for the Administration's information technology research initiative by 70 percent — a program that would sponsor a wave of innovations in the same way that the ARPANET led to today's Internet; and
- cut NASA's budget by \$1 billion; cut \$580 million for environmental and energy research.

Podesta also criticized Republican leaders for earmarking nearly \$1 billion in R&D projects while slashing funding for higher priority projects. A move, he says, which undermines the discipline of competition and peer review.

The issue of R&D funding, says Podesta, should not be a partisan one, noting that "just last week the *Washington Post* quoted former President George Bush's Science Advisor Allan Bromley as saying "Congress has lost sight of the critical role science plays in America." He said, "This is a 19th century budget for a 21st century economy. It appears that these Republicans grew up watching too much Fred Flintstone and not enough *Jetsons*."

OVERHAUL OF NIH'S PEER REVIEW PROCESS; PANEL SEEKS COMMENTS

The Panel on Scientific Boundaries for Review, of the National Institutes of Health's Center for Scientific Review (CSR), is conducting a comprehensive examination of the organization and function of the review process managed by CSR. CSR manages the peer review process for the majority of the grant applications submitted to the NIH. The Panel is currently seeking comments on its Phase I draft report. According to the Panel, the purpose of the evaluation is to "position the CSR peer review system to foster the expanded research opportunities created by the stunning successes of the biomedical research enterprise, as well as to permit the review system to keep pace with the accelerating rate of change in the way biomedical research is now

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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 \$75; institutional subscriptions, \$150, overseas mail, \$150. 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. <http://members.aol.com/socscience/COSSAindex.htm>

performed." The examination will occur in two phases.

According to CSR Director Ellie Ehrenfeld at a CSR Advisory Committee earlier this year, the Boundaries Panel's task is to recommend a peer review system, including the appropriate alignment of study sections and initial review groups (IRG) along with some guiding principles. The Committee is "playing a key role in advising Ehrenfeld on all aspects of CSR function, and has initiated a number of activities to improve the peer review process at CSR."

The Boundaries Panel, as was the NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Review Integration Working Group, is included in the six priority areas of the CSR, including (1) study section organization; (2) reviewer quality and study section composition; (3) perception that segments of the community are ill served; (4) speed and consistency of the receipt, referral, and review process; (5) responsiveness to NIH funding Institutes and Centers; and (6) enhanced function of the Scientific Review Administrators.

Both the Panel and the Working Group fall under the study section organization priority. The Working Group was created in response to a 1992 statute that required the movement of the three agencies that made up the former Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration into the NIH. Ehrenfeld saw the requirement as an opportunity to reexamine the review carried out by CSR of all behavioral and social science. The Working Group recommended, with extensive comments from the extramural community, including COSSA, 16 study sections. (See *UPDATE*, October 12, 1998) These were combined with the existing epidemiology and nursing study sections into three IRGs: Biobehavioral and Behavioral Processes (BBBP); Risk, Prevention and Health Behavior (RPHB); and Social Science, Nursing, Epidemiology and Methods (SNEM). A description of the IRGs can be found at <http://www.drug.nih.gov/review/bss.htm>

The new report will be instrumental in determining how NIH study sections are organized and, thus, should be of interest to all NIH grantees. Phase I (to be completed in November 1999) will result in the development of a set of "Integrated Review Groups" (IRGs), or clusters of scientifically related study sections, designed to "facilitate the

review of contemporary scientific areas and opportunities, and thereby contribute to the translation of progress in the basic science laboratory into progress at the bedside, as well as to move the progress from the bedside to the laboratory bench."

The Panel expects the revised structure to assist CSR in anticipating emerging fields of research and to accommodate the rapid pace of scientific change. Four guiding principles were used by the Panel in designing the proposed set of IRGs:

1. There should be a home for the review of all science that is relevant to contemporary biomedical research;
2. The research topics encompassed by each IRG should be sufficiently cohesive to allow the external advisory group of scientists for that IRG to judge its entire scope of science;
3. The research related to a given system of disease, including fundamental studies, should be clustered for review within a single IRG or a related set of such IRGs;
4. The organization should be flexible enough to adjust to the rapid changes in scientific opportunities expected in the years ahead.

The Panel recommended 21 IRGs including: Health of the Population, Risk Prevention; Health; Behavioral and Biobehavioral Processes; Integrative, Functional, and Cognitive Neuroscience.

Cultural Norms Outlined

The Panel also outlined cultural norms that it believes should govern the CSR review process. The report notes that adoption of the cultural norms need not wait for the completion of the proposed reorganization. The system, according to the report, could benefit from implementation of them now. The norms address:

1. Who is a peer?
2. What is the role of a peer reviewer?
3. What are the roles and responsibilities of the Scientific Review Administrators (SRAs), Chairs, and study section members?
4. What is the appropriate relationship between study sections and disciplines?
5. What types of research have the potential to have an impact on the ability of the NIH to achieve its mission?
6. What should a grant application propose?

7. What perspective should be used in review, and how should the results of the review be communicated?
8. What is the role of preliminary data?

Phase II

During Phase II, beginning in the year 2000 and continuing through the next two years, expert groups of extramural scientists and NIH staff will create the scientifically-related study sections that will make up each IRG. These sections will be based on the principles outlined in the report. According to the report, recommendations will be implemented with "extensive involvement of the extramural research community." The Panel believes that study sections should be created according to the following principles:

- ◆ The range of science considered should not be too narrow or too broad;
- ◆ To allow for flexibility in the review process, overlap of scientific expertise of study sections within an IRG and often between IRGs is desirable;
- ◆ Whenever appropriate, basic research should be connected to specific diseases or organs;
- ◆ Connected to basic science;
- ◆ When it is necessary or desirable there should be a density of experience in the same study section;
- ◆ There should be a balance of breadth and depth of study section members;
- ◆ To achieve sufficient breadth and depth of expertise on each study section and create flexibility, study section members should function as "mobile" experts, moving from one study section to another as required; and
- ◆ Where possible, study sections should serve more than one NIH Institute.

The NIH welcomes comments through October 15, 1999 at
<http://tango0.cit.nih.gov/csr/boundaries.taf>.

CIRCULAR A-110 THE SUBJECT OF SENATE CAUCUS MEETING

The Senate Science and Technology Caucus held a round table discussion July 27 on the proposed revisions to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-110. The revisions, legislated in

the 105th Congress, required the application of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to all federal awards in which data is used to create federal regulations.

"We want to do what is right and appropriate," said Caucus Chair Senator Bill Frist (R-TN), emphasizing that the proposed revisions will affect the public, scientific, academic and the business communities in many different ways. Frist noted that this was the first time the issue had been discussed in the Senate, albeit informally, as part of the S&T Caucus. The purpose for the meeting, said Frist, was to look at the implications of the OMB revisions on science, business, and the university community.

Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL), also in attendance, explained the impetus for the legislative provision he sponsored. He emphasized that the intent of the provision was to compel the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Carol Browner to provide him with information he requested during a hearing by the VA, HUD, IA Appropriations Subcommittee. It was not, he said, aimed at the broader research community. According to Shelby, Browner responded to his request for the information by telling him to "go ask Harvard." Shelby further emphasized that it was "outrageous" that she would not provide his Committee with the "secret data" being used by the EPA to support the implementation of controversial rules. Increasing access is so important, continued Shelby, when science is used to support federal policy. He stressed that trust in government requires greater transparency, and that greater "scrutiny" is consistent with scientific accountability. Shelby argued that FOIA has worked for over 30 years. It is a familiar and flexible mechanism and should not be feared, the Senator declared. It errs on the side of discretion and nondisclosure and is hardly a "firehose of information," he concluded.

Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ), who holds a Ph.D. in Physics, and testified at the July 15 hearing held by the House Government Reform Subcommittee on Government Management and Information Technology, suggested "that Congress reopen the discussion." Paying tribute to the late Representative George Brown (D-CA) for his immediate recognition of problems associated with the provision, Holt said that there are four problems with the bill: 1) it may force breaches of

confidentiality, 2) it provides the temptation for harassment, 3) it may impose possible administrative burdens, and 4) there are intellectual property issues that need to be addressed. He stressed that it is vital and important to have a vibrant research and development process so we can propel the economy.

Other participants of the S&T Roundtable included Wendy Gramm, Director, Regulatory Studies Center, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, and a former Administrator for OMB's Office of the Information and Regulatory Affairs under the Reagan Administration; Donald N. Langenberg, Chancellor, University of Maryland; James O'Reilly, Visiting Professor of Law, University of Cincinnati College of Law, who testified at the July 15 House hearing as a "technical expert" on FOIA; and Ed Wasserman, President of the American Chemical Society, and Science Advisor to duPont Central Research & Development.

O'Reilly and Gramm argued that FOIA is well equipped to handle privacy exemptions. O'Reilly continued to stress that FOIA, as an infrastructure for handling sensitive data, works well. Regarding harassment, O'Reilly noted that, compared to the current system, the Shelby amendment adds little of significance.

Langenberg and Wasserman stressed that the provision will be a major roadblock to continued progress and could stop science dead in its tracks when there is a commercial advantage to doing so. Good science will not put up with this, said Langenberg. Work that keeps us going forward, noted Langenberg, will go unchecked by regulatory bodies because we will not be able to find the scientists to investigate. Wasserman argued that FOIA is not an appropriate instrument and does not protect academe and industry from confidential proprietary breaches. Without additional protections, the provision, he underscored, may do more harm than good. Wasserman insisted that research partnerships between industry and academe will be dampened.

Frist raised a concern voiced by his constituents: if the provision is challenged in court, will the court rely on the original statute rather than the OMB regulations? Prior to the August release of OMB's second draft provisions, Shelby had indicated that he "would listen to anything rational" regarding FOIA

expansion. OMB still hopes to publish a final rule by September 30, following a second round of public comments that were due on September 10.

SURGEON GENERAL ISSUES "CALL TO ACTION TO PREVENT SUICIDE" AS

Highlighting the fact that "suicide is a serious public health problem" that requires an evidence-based approach to prevention, U.S. Surgeon General and Assistant Secretary for Health David Satcher, in a letter to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, issued a "*Surgeon General's Call to Action.*" The "call to action" introduces a "blueprint for addressing suicide — Awareness, Intervention, and Methodology, or AIM." As a framework, AIM includes 15 key recommendations that were refined from consensus and evidence based findings designed to devise a nationwide, collaborative effort to reduce suicidal behaviors.

Speaking at the American Psychological Association's Annual Convention, held August 20-24 in Boston, Satcher emphasized that "there is a lot of work to do at the level of awareness." There is a need to conduct further research, he stressed, emphasizing his hope for increased attention to supporting research on mental health.

"Recognizing that mental and substance abuse disorders confer the greatest risks for suicidal behavior," the recommendations suggest approaches to suicide and injury prevention by addressing the problems of undetected and under treated mental and substance abuse disorders in conjunction with other public health approaches, said Satcher.

The 15 recommendations, which are designed to serve as a framework for immediate action, include:

- Enhance research to understand risk and protective factors related suicide, their interaction, and their effects on suicide and suicidal behaviors. Increase research on effective suicide prevention programs, clinical treatments for suicidal individuals, and culture-specific interventions.
- Develop additional scientific strategies for evaluating suicide prevention interventions and ensure that evaluation components are included in all suicide prevention programs.

■ Encourage the development and evaluation of new prevention technologies, including firearm safety measures, to reduce easy access to lethal means of suicide.

The report highlights that “clear progress has been made in the scientific understanding of suicide, mental and substance abuse disorders, and developing interventions to treatment these disorders.” Conversely, the report also acknowledges that “much remains to be learned, however, about the common risk factors for mental disorders and substance abuse, suicides and other forms of intentional violence, including homicide, domestic violence, and child abuse.” Expansion of the base of scientific evidence will help towards developing more effective interventions.

Dr. Satcher is expected to release a comprehensive report on all aspects of mental health later this year, along with a comprehensive national suicide prevention strategy in 2000.

Violence: A Public Health Issue

Satcher, commenting on the recent rash of youth violence, stressed that the recent spate of shootings are “about us.” He noted that it is the tendency of Americans to want to put some distance between the incidences of violence and ourselves. Initially, the increase in youth violence was blamed on the “pathology of the black family. After the shootings in Kentucky, the violent culture of the South was blamed.” But in the recent Columbine shootings, the “media was without explanation — it was no longer them but us.” Violence, stressed Satcher, “is a public health issue and places an undue health burden” on the United States. It results in pain, suffering, and disabilities, he said.

GROUPS STRESS IMPORTANCE OF COUNTING ALL CHILDREN IN CENSUS

A group of census stakeholders held a press conference at the National Press Club August 26 to stress the importance of ensuring that all children are counted in the upcoming decennial census. Terriann Lowenthal of the Census 2000 Initiative moderated the session which included William O’Hare of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Jacqueline Byers of the

National Association of Counties, and Ronald Henderson of the National Education Association.

O’Hare, coordinator of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Project, based his comments on his recently released report, “The Overlooked Undercount: Children Missed in the Decennial Census.” The report considers the 1990 Census and undercount of the nation’s children. In the 1990 Census, the Census Bureau missed approximately 8.4 million people, while it double counted approximately 4 million people. The net undercount, therefore, of roughly 4.4 million people represented 1.6 percent of the nation’s estimated population. Children under age 18, O’Hare noted, were undercounted at a rate of 3.2 percent — half of the total net undercount.

Missing Minority Children

Minority children, said O’Hare, make up a disproportionate amount of the undercounted children. He pointed out that in the 1990 Census, African American children were missed at a rate of 7 percent, Asian and Pacific Islander children were missed at a rate of 3.2 percent, American Indians were missed at a rate of 13.8 percent, Hispanic children were missed at a rate of 5 percent, while white children were missed at a rate of only 2 percent.

Why are children missed? O’Hare noted several reasons. Children, he said, are increasingly living in situations where there is no biological mother or father. “For example, the high undercount rate among black children may be related to the fact that eight percent of all black children do not live with either parent.” He also pointed to the large number of children living in foster care, which has increased from “280,000 children nationwide in 1986 to 483,000 in 1995.” O’Hare further noted that some children are missed simply because their parents do not send in the census questionnaire.

Lowenthal stressed the importance of counting all children. She pointed out that billions of dollars in federal aid are misdirected away from communities that need the money due to the undercount of children.

O’Hare’s new report is available on the Annie E. Casey Foundation webpage at:
<http://www.kidscount.org>.

A TRIP TO NORWAY AND THE "SOCIAL SCIENCE DREAM MACHINE" HS

During August, COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver spent a week in Norway as a guest of the government. The trip was arranged through the auspices of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in the United States and its Science Attache, Tore Li. During five days in Oslo and Bergen, he met with officials of the Ministries of Education, Research and Church Affairs, and Children and Social Affairs. He made a presentation about COSSA and U.S. social science to the Research Council of Norway, where Arvid Hallen, head of the Culture and Society Division, described the Norwegian research structure. In addition, Hans Skoie, a noted science policy journalist, interviewed Silver about U.S. science policy.

COSSA's head also met with administrators and social science faculty at the Universities of Oslo and Bergen. Researchers from the Institute of Social Research and the Norwegian Social Research Institutes (NOVA) related the role of the independent institute structure of Norwegian social science.

In Bergen, Silver met with the leaders of the Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD), the country's data archive and survey research center. At the NSD, Director Bjorn Henrichsen and Jostein Ryssevik presented what they called "The Social Science Dream Machine." The Networked Social Science Tools and Resources (NESSTAR) project is an attempt to build a Virtual Data Library. A joint project of NSD, the UK Data Archive, and the Danish Data Archive, NESSTAR allows users to: 1) locate multiple data sources across national boundaries; 2) browse detailed metadata about these data; 3) analyze and visualize data online; and 4) download the appropriate subsets of data in one of a number of formats for local use. So far, the European archives searchable through NESSTAR include those in Norway, Great Britain, Denmark and Finland. NESSTAR also provides links to other data archives such as the Inter-university Consortium of Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan and others in Europe. It hopes to add these to the "dream machine" at a later date. For more information on NESSTAR go to <http://www.nesstar.org>.

NICHD'S ALEXANDER RECEIVES LOUITTIT AWARD AS

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's (NICHD) Director Duane Alexander received the Richard Louttit Award from the Federation of Behavioral, Cognitive and Behavioral Sciences (Federation) for "fostering significant advances in behavior and the application of that research." According to Richard McCarthy of the American Psychological Association (APA), the Louttit Award is not for those who show promise, but for those who richly fulfill the promise. The award is named after Richard Louttit, the long-time director of NSF's Behavioral and Neural Sciences Division. National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Alan Leshner was last year's recipient.

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Executive Director John Hagen, who introduced Alexander, noted that the NICHD is a key federal funding agency for SRCD members and commended Alexander for his insistence that the activities of the NICHD include behavioral science and applications. Hagen emphasized that SRCD, APA, and the Federation "owe a great deal of gratitude to Alexander," stressing that he was the first NIH Director to recognize that human health is more than biology, behavior, and environment — that it is instead a product of the mixture of the three. Hagen cited as an example the dramatic reduction in infant deaths attributed to SIDS [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome] — literally millions of infants — as the result of a simple behavioral intervention.

COSSA WELCOMES NEWEST CONTRIBUTOR

COSSA is happy to welcome our newest contributor, Washington University in St. Louis. We look forward to working with the university on issues of mutual concern.

COSSA's webpage is updated on a regular basis.
Check it out!

<http://members.aol.com/socscience/COSSAindex.htm>

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