

NIH OFFICIALS APPEAR BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATORS

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Congressional Appropriations Committees want to complete their appropriations hearings by April 22, 1999, instead of June 11, as happened last year. Thus, officials from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have already appeared before both the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on Labor, Health and Human Services, chaired by Representative John Porter (R-IL) and Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA), respectively.

On February 23, NIH Director Harold Varmus and all of the NIH Directors appeared in a single hearing with Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. According to Senator Specter, the NIH's professional judgment budget (how much the agency could reasonably spend to respond to current scientific opportunities) is \$19.3 billion. Varmus quickly noted that the figure was in response to Specter's specific request and that the agency "could operate effectively under the President's budget" of \$15.9 billion.

Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), the ranking Democrat on the Subcommittee, noted that last year the Subcommittee was able to provide "a record \$2 billion increase for NIH — setting a course to double NIH funding in five years." He added that the President's request for a 2.1 percent increase does not even keep up with medical inflation, let alone continue along the path of doubling the NIH budget over 5 years.

Harkin has not been alone in his disappointment with the President's budget; members from both sides of the aisle have voiced their concerns publically. In a March 16 press conference, COSSA joined more than 300 organizations — including the leaders of NIHx2, the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding, the Campaign for Medical Research, the

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NEW FACES AT NSF APPROPRIATION HEARING IN HOUSE

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With a new Chairman, Representative James Walsh (R-NY) and a new Ranking Member, Representative Alan Mollohan (D-WV), the House VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee heard new National Science Foundation Director Rita Colwell defend NSF's FY 2000 budget proposal at a hearing on March 4. The proposed budget calls for a 5.8 percent increase to a total of \$3.954 billion.

Unlike hearings in previous years, Chairman Walsh did not offer an opening statement that praised NSF for its effectiveness as an agency that supports the basic research that drives economic advances in this country. Rather, Walsh simply announced that NSF was appearing and turned to Colwell to begin her statement. Later in the hearing he appeared still upset over NSF's decision a number of years ago not to renew funding for the Supercomputer Center at Cornell University, saying it still left a "sour taste."

Both Colwell and National Science Board Chairman Eamon Kelly, an economist and former President of Tulane University, made a strong case for NSF's proposed budget. The director expressed concern about the imbalance in federal funding created by the "sharp nature of the shift toward the biomedical fields," in the past 25 years. Both referred to NSF-supported basic research as "the \$4 billion fulcrum" around which the U.S. science

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enterprise revolves. Colwell did say that NSF had asked the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for a \$4.3 billion budget for FY 2000, an increase of 15 percent, and that NSF did deserve parity, in the future, with NIH and NASA, whose current budgets are three to four times larger than that of NSF.

Walsh and other Republican members of the Subcommittee questioned whether the major new initiative in the NSF budget, Information Technology for the Twenty First Century (IT²), scheduled for an increase of \$146 million, was a politically-driven endeavor by the White House to enhance Vice President Gore's reputation. Colwell responded that IT² was a natural progression from earlier initiatives to enhance information collection and analysis, based on the rapid acceleration of change in computing and computational power. IT² would provide computing power to handle huge data bases that could help examine the impact of climate on health, the evolution of language, and other important areas of science. She also noted that \$10 million out of NSF's proposed allotment would support studies of the social and economic implications of information technology, including human-computer interface studies.

Members of the Subcommittee also focused on the other new initiative in the proposed FY 2000 budget; Biocomplexity in the Environment (BE).

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Representative Carrie Meek (D-FL) seemed perplexed by the endeavor, wondering how it would contribute to the "economic good." Colwell explained that BE was an extension of Life in Earth's Environments, an earlier NSF initiative. The new program would spend \$50 million more than already allocated funds for enhancing environmental databases and "ecological forecasting."

Representatives Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) and Anne Northrup (R-KY) sought to use the BE initiative as a way to push their interest in moving the research funds of the Environmental Protection Agency to NSF. EPA's research budget is over \$600 million.

Chairman Supports Repeal of Data Sharing Provision

The issue of the revisions to the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Circular A-110 forced by the Congress in last year's Omnibus Appropriations Act (See *UPDATE*, February 8, 1999) also came up during the hearing. The provision would require agencies to share data from grants they support to individuals who request it under the Freedom of Information Act. Chairman Walsh indicated his concern and announced he was co-sponsoring legislation proposed by Representative George Brown (D-CA) to repeal the provision. Representative David Price (D-NC) also commented on the dangers the new law presented to the continuation of the excellent science this nation has produced. On the other side, Northrup appeared to support the new provision complaining about EPA's unwillingness to provide "raw data" from research projects that affect public policy.

HOUSE APPROPRIATORS WARY OF EMPHASIS ON COMPETITIVE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

The United States agricultural research and extension network is "the envy of the world," according to Representative Joe Skeen (R-NM), Chairman of the House Agricultural, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. On March 2 he asked witnesses from the Department of Agriculture's Research, Education, and Economics

(REE) office why the proposed FY 2000 budget seeks "to change it [the research and extension network] a great deal."

The budget, the first proposed since the enactment of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act of 1998, includes a significant (\$81 million) increase for the National Research Initiative (NRI) Competitive Grants program. However, it also proposes reductions (\$27 million) in Hatch Act formula grant programs, and Special Grants (\$54.7 million). REE Undersecretary I. Miley Gonzalez defended this recommendation as a way to balance the research portfolio. He also stressed the need for "multi-disciplinary, regional, multi-state, and multi-institutional strategies" to "facilitate both effective and efficient returns on our research, education, and extension dollars." In justifying the increases in the REE budget proposals, Gonzalez quoted the House Science Committee Report *Unlocking Our Future* on two occasions.

Gonzalez also advocated funding the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems, which would provide \$120 million for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) budget to competitively award research, education, and extension grants focused on high priority issues. This program was authorized, but not funded in FY 1999. The REE also intends, according to Gonzalez, to make \$20 to \$40 million available for research, extension, and education under a revived Fund for Rural America. Congress prohibited the Agriculture Department from spending funds on this program in FY 1999.

The response of the Subcommittee's members to these developments was agreement with the Chairman and Representative Allen Boyd (D-FL) that "research and education is the key to the success of agriculture" in this country. However, as noted by Representative George Nethercutt (R-WA), it is the prerogative of appropriators to allocate funds through Special Grants to particular universities to support projects deemed worthy by Members of Congress. The Subcommittee's Ranking Democrat Representative Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) questioned the reduction in Hatch Act funding. CSREES Acting Administrator Colien Heferan noted that OMB emphasized "competitively awarded research," at the

expense of formula funds in the proposed budget. Representative Joanne Emerson (R-MO) voiced concern that the NRI increase could go to support studies of climate change.

The proposed budgets of the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) were also part of the discussion. ERS Administrator Susan Offutt stressed the increases in the budget for enhancing commodity market analysis and the information needs of small farmers. She was asked by Emerson about the increase for a carbon sequestration initiative that "will increase the use of production practices that build organic soil carbon that enhance the quality and productivity of affected lands." Emerson was concerned that ERS was following the guidelines of the Kyoto protocol, even though that had not been ratified yet. Nethercutt also criticized REE for an over emphasis on global change research.

Boyd asked David Bey, Administrator of NASS, why his agency should continue to exist given modern communication systems that can get up-to-date data to farmers quickly. Bey defended NASS by noting that "not only are NASS statistical reports important to assess the current supply and demand of agricultural commodities," but they are important "to farm organizations, commodity groups, and public officials who analyze agricultural policy, foreign trade, construction and environmental programs, research, rural development, and many other activities."

GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE APPROVES SEVEN CENSUS BILLS; PARTISAN FEUDING CONTINUES

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The latest round in partisan battling over the 2000 Census occurred at a March 17 House Government Reform Committee. Chairman Dan Burton (R-IN) convened the hearing to "mark-up" several pieces of legislation designed to improve the accuracy of the upcoming head count. The hearing was marked by partisan wrangling over procedure. Democrats, including Government Reform Committee Ranking Member Henry Waxman (D-CA) and Census Subcommittee Ranking Member

Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), argued that Burton convened the mark-up without first holding hearings on the bills and without the advice of the professionals at the Census Bureau — only two of the seven bills were considered in hearings.

The bills are part of Census Subcommittee Chairman Dan Miller's (R-FL) America Counts Today (ACT) initiative. The ACT initiative, according to Miller and the Republican leadership, is a series of proposals designed to increase the accuracy of the 2000 Census and reduce the historic differential undercount. Democrats argued that the proposals would do little to address and, indeed, reduce the differential undercount. The bills, according to Democrats, could actually achieve the opposite: a reduction in the accuracy and an increase in the differential undercount of the upcoming Census. The professionals at the Census Bureau, including Director Kenneth Prewitt, have also expressed concerns with the bills. Bureau officials have noted that while some of the bills may be promising, most do not address the problem of the differential undercount. Nevertheless, the Republicans carried the day and the Committee approved all the bills.

The seven bills considered by the Committee were: H.R. 472, "Local Census Quality Check Act," would reinstitute Post Census Local Review (PCLR) in the 2000 Census. The procedure allows local government officials to review and dispute preliminary housing unit counts and jurisdictional boundaries before they are finalized. H.R. 683, "Decennial Census Improvement Act of 1999," would waive consideration of income earned as a temporary Census Bureau employee in determining eligibility for federal benefits. H.R. 928, "2000 Census Mail Outreach Improvement Act," would require a second mailing of the 2000 Census questionnaire. H.R. 929, "2000 Census Language Barrier Removal Act," would require the Census Bureau to print the census questionnaire in 33 languages (other than English) and Braille. The Bureau has planned to print the form in six languages — English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and Tagalog — which account for 99 percent of the nation's households. H.R. 1009, "2000 Census Community Participation Enhancement Act," would require the Secretary of Commerce to develop

a \$26 million matching grant program for outreach, promotion, partnership, and education activities. H.R. 1010 (no title) would increase to \$300 million from \$100 million the Bureau's funding for census promotional, outreach, and marketing activities. The bill was approved with an amendment offered by Danny Davis (D-IL) that would target the advertising to communities that have historic undercounts. H.R. 1058, "Census in the Schools Promotion Act," would require the Bureau to send information regarding census education to nearly every teacher in the country. The Census Bureau had planned on sending a letter to every school in the country.

The bills now will be considered by the full House with a final vote expected on some of the bills during the week of March 22.

BUDGET REQUEST "ZEROES OUT" ONE SOURCE OF NIJ FUNDS; HOUSE CJS APPROPRIATIONS CHAIR NOT PLEASED

At a March 16 hearing of the House Appropriations Committee Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) criticized the President's budget for cutting all funds for a popular and highly touted block grant program. The Clinton Administration's budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 zeroes out funding for the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program (LLEBG). In the past, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has received significant appropriations through the LLEBG.

The LLEBG is a block grant program which provides funds to local governments and local law enforcement agencies to reduce crime and enhance public safety. The Bureau of Justice Assistance administers the program, which provides money for, among other things: hiring, training, and employing on a continuing basis new and additional law enforcement officers; paying overtime to presently employed law enforcement officers; procuring equipment, technology, and other material directly related to basic law enforcement functions; and establishing or supporting drug courts. In FY 1999, as in FY 1998, NIJ received \$20 million from the

LLEBG for the Technology Development for State and Local Law Enforcement Program. In the past, NIJ has used the funds for developing and testing standards, investigative and forensic science, officer protection and crime prevention, training and simulation, less-than-lethal weapons, and information technologies.

LLEBG, a favorite of most Republicans, has been on the administration's elimination list for the last several years. In FY 1999 the administration cut all funds for the LLEBG; Congress restored funding, though, to \$523 million in FY 1999. Chairman Rogers wondered aloud why the Clinton Administration continually cuts funding for the LLEBG, when it has proven to be a popular and effective program. In place of the LLEBG, the administration has proposed several new programs. Rogers, obviously unhappy with Clinton's plan, noted that the move forces appropriators to scrounge for funds for this program. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT), chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has noted recently that the administration's plan to cut funding for the LLEBG is unacceptable.

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National Health Council, and Research!America — to call attention to the administration's lack of commitment to medical research. The groups were joined by Sam Donaldson (a cancer survivor), Morton Kondracke (executive director of *Roll Call* newspaper), and several congressional leaders, including Senators Specter, Harkin, Connie Mack (R-FL), and Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY). Former members of Congress Bob Michel (R-IL) and Paul Rogers (D-FL) also joined the groups in support of doubling the funding for NIH by the fiscal year 2003.

House Appropriations Subcommittee Holds Hearings Early

On February 24 the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education and Related Agencies Chair Porter began a two-week hearing process with each of the

Institutes appearing before the Subcommittee. Porter apologized several times for the condensed schedule and cited the need to complete all of the Subcommittee's hearings by April 22.

With all of the Subcommittee members in attendance, Varmus noted that the "strong support for the NIH is inspired by the importance the public places in the government's role to combat disease." Using the analogy of a "war against disease," Varmus told the Subcommittee that "over several decades of medical research, we have learned that disease is a complex and evolving enemy — one that draws upon the combined forces of heredity, environmental insults, infectious agents, the aging process, personal habits, and other factors, and act upon a variety of tissues and organs." These diseases, he continued, "can be fought with medicines and vaccines, with surgical procedures and medical devices, with behavioral modification, and environmental remediation."

Below is a summary of the various Institute Directors' testimony regarding social and behavioral science.

Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. NIH Deputy Director Ruth Kirschstein, testifying on behalf of the Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) within the Office of the Director, noted that "many of our most serious health concerns are related to behaviors." Kirschstein highlighted the OBSSR's three trans-NIH initiatives: Innovative Approaches to Disease Prevention through Behavior Change; Educational Workshops on Interdisciplinary Research; and the Mind/Body Research initiative developed in response to Congressional concern regarding the impact of stress on numerous medical conditions. (See *UPDATE*, January 25, 1999)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Director Enoch Gordis emphasized that "[j]ust as careful, controlled trials are needed for medication development, they are equally necessary for proving the effectiveness of prevention efforts." Gordis noted the Institute has an extensive prevention portfolio and that one of its major areas of concern is alcohol use among young

people. He also noted that the NIAAA's National Advisory Council has formed a subcommittee on college-age drinking. The subcommittee, composed of ten college presidents and 12 leading researchers, will advise the Institute on a productive research agenda in this area.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Director Duane Alexander testified that new research challenges are emerging as we move into the 21st Century. He noted that "at least 30 percent or 15 million of our nation's children fail to develop adequate reading skills," with poor and minority children at the greatest risk. Alexander told the Subcommittee that each year, thousands of children from homes where Spanish is the primary language spoken enter school and struggle to read in English. He further emphasized that there is a lack of sound experimental evidence indicating the most effective way to teach English skills to Spanish-speaking children.

National Institute of Nursing Research. National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) Director Patricia Grady testified that NINR "continues to refine interventions that are responsive to age, gender, cultural identity, and socioeconomic environments." Grady cited several studies that exemplify the Institutes contributions to improving health and preventing disease: The Cardiovascular Health in Children (CHIC), an eight-week education and exercise intervention study that is being conducted in rural and urban elementary schools across North Carolina; and NINR-supported research on coping-skills training for young adults with diabetes. In FY 2000, said Grady, NINR will increase its emphasis on diabetes research, including looking at diabetes self-management strategies that include cultural, ethnic, and age-related factors. NINR will also identify ways to facilitate adherence to regimens that require close adjustments in medication and food intake, said Grady.

Office of AIDS Research. Recently appointed Director of the NIH Office of AIDS Research (OAR) Neal Nathanson said that the \$7 million in additional funding provided to the OAR will fund the Clinton Administration's and the Congressional Black Caucus' October 1998 initiative to address the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on minority

populations. The resources, said Nathanson, will support projects to: increase the number of minority investigators conducting behavioral and clinical research; target the links between substance abuse, sexual behaviors, and HIV infection; and increase outreach education programs for minority physicians and at-risk populations. Nathanson said that the OAR is focusing on interventions that address co-occurrence of other STDs, drug abuse, mental illness, as well as those that consider the role of culture, family, and other social factors in minority communities.

National Institute on Aging. National Institute on Aging Director Richard Hodes emphasized that studies are showing that America's older population is becoming healthier and more fit. The Institute will continue to promote research on the causes and economic consequences of the decline in disability rates with the goal of further accelerating these improvements, said Hodes. He emphasized that "lifestyle changes" can effectively reduce the risk of major disease.

National Institute on Drug Abuse. Alan Leshner, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), told Subcommittee members that while there is a "strong scientific base to more systematically approach how we treat people with addictions. . . there are a number of other promising therapies that have not yet been tested on a large scale or in diverse populations." Leshner cited this as one of many reasons that NIDA is launching the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network. (See *UPDATE*, January 25, 1999) The plan is to establish the necessary infrastructure to enable the field to more rapidly test and bring new science-based treatments to real-life settings. He noted that building the Network is a major priority for the drug abuse field and was the principal recommendation of the Institute of Medicine's report *Bridging the Gap Between Practice and Research*. Regarding prevention research, Leshner noted that NIDA is entering what many would consider the next generation of drug prevention research. NIDA's agenda will reflect the Institute's commitment to direct prevention interventions to the specific needs of different groups of young people at risk for drug abuse.

National Institute of Mental Health. National Institute of Mental Health Director Steven Hyman reminded the Subcommittee that according to the Global Burden of Disease study, sponsored by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, four of the ten leading causes of disability are mental disorders, including the number one cause, major depression. In his written testimony, Hyman emphasized that there is a "dearth of qualified investigators" in the field of children's mental health research. To address this, NIMH has issued a special Request for Applications to create incentives for experienced investigators to move into this field.

John E. Fogarty International Center.
Appearing before the Subcommittee for the first time,

FIC Director and NIH Associate Director Gerald T. Keusch, told the Subcommittee that he "hopes to foster new partnerships among institutions involved in global health, including development agencies and industry." According to Keusch, research ethics are one of the Center's new initiatives for FY 2000. FIC proposes to develop novel training programs designed to increase the number of investigators in developing nations with expertise in applied research ethics. Keusch also noted that an initiative planned in cooperation with the World Bank will examine the economic implications of health investments. "Several lines of evidence suggest that health may be a precondition for economic enrichment of a society at the population level and for its lowest income groups at the household level," said Keusch.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

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

INTERAGENCY EDUCATION RESEARCH FUNDS AVAILABLE

The National Science Foundation (NSF) in partnership with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is sponsoring a competition to make awards for education research.

For this new Interagency Educational Research Initiative (IERI) approximately \$30 million will be available in FY 1999, \$22 million from NSF and \$8 million from OERI. The proposed FY 2000 budget asks for \$50 million for this program in FY 2000. This initiative emerged from a report from the President's Committee of Advisers on Science and Technology (PCAST), *Report to the President on the Use of Technology to Strengthen K-12 Education in the United States*, published in March 1997, which called for massive expansion of funding for this kind of research.

Optional letters of intent are due April 1. Full proposals are due May 14, 1999. NSF is acting as the administrator of the program and standard NSF applications procedures will be used.

The Initiative hopes to build a knowledge base for improving educational practice by: fostering innovative research on basic learning, teaching, and organizational mechanisms; and developing sustainable and scalable interventions in education. A particular area of interest is the use of information and computer technologies for teaching and learning and how these technologies are used in homes, schools, and other learning environments.

The focus area for FY 1999 proposals will be research directed toward understanding how to make substantial improvements in: school readiness for learning reading and mathematics; K-3 learning in reading, mathematics, and science; and education of preK-12 mathematics, reading, and science teachers in content knowledge and science underlying cognitive development and learning.

For background information see <http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/eri-ed-nsf>. For more information about the competition go to <http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?nsf9984> or call John Cherniavsky at 703/306-1650 or email jchernia@nsf.gov.

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