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PREWITT APPEARS BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATORS FOR FIRST TIME DH

Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt had a memorable first appearance before the House Appropriations Subcommittee that provides funds for his agency. The Commerce, Justice, State, Appropriations Subcommittee heard testimony from Prewitt on March 23 regarding the Fiscal Year 2000 budget request for the Census Bureau. Throughout the hearing, Republican members of the Subcommittee offered strong criticism of the Clinton Administration's planned use of scientific statistical sampling in the 2000 Census, while they also complained that the Bureau has not provided them with an overall cost figure for the upcoming decennial census. In turn, Democratic members warned Prewitt that the upcoming census was a political battle, not an appropriations battle.

The Census Bureau recently provided the Congress with an operational plan for the upcoming 2000 Census. The plan, however, did not contain a final dollar amount for the overall cost of the decennial census. Prewitt promised Rogers that the Bureau would provide an exact figure as soon as they were sure it was a final figure. The administration has requested $2.8 billion for the 2000 Census, but this number is not a final number. The final cost of the 2000 Census is expected to increase anywhere from $1 to $2 billion above this level. The Census Bureau was forced to revise its operational plan after the Supreme Court ruled that a provision of the Census Act prohibits the use of scientific statistical sampling for the purpose of Congressional apportionment.

Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) made it quite clear at the outset that he is upset and "completely flabbergasted" over the Census Bureau's "unwillingness" to provide the Subcommittee with a complete operational plan, including a final figure for the cost of the upcoming census. He said he could

(Continued on p. 6)

SENATE VA, HUD APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE HEARS NSF AND OSTP OFFICIALS DH

On March 23 the Senate VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee heard National Science Foundation (NSF) Director Rita Colwell, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director Neal Lane, and National Science Board Chairman Eamon Kelly testify on behalf of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 budget request for NSF and OSTP. The three were warmly greeted by Chairman Christopher "Kit" Bond (R-MO), Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), and Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT).

Bond opened the hearing by praising the work of the NSF and the OSTP. He commended the OSTP and Lane for their "continuing efforts to provide policy leadership on the important issues facing the scientific community." He further complimented the NSF for "pushing the boundaries of scientific research and acting as the catalyst for new and exciting cutting edge research." Bond, however, reminded Colwell, Lane, and Kelly that because of the prevailing budget caps established in the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, money would be very tight in the upcoming budget.

Bond, Burns, and Mikulski expressed great interest with the President's new Information

Inside *UPDATE*...

Technology for the Twenty-First Century Initiative, or "IT^2." Burns questioned how IT^2, which is funded at $366 million in the president's FY 2000 request ($146 million through NSF), differed from previous years' initiatives, like Knowledge and Distributed Intelligence (KDI), High Performance Computing and Communications (HPCC), and the Next Generation Internet (NGI). Burns also questioned whether the NSF had the internal capacity to run the new IT^2 initiative. Mikulski, on the other hand, noted that she is "very excited about the NSF's information technology initiative," saying that it is "exactly the kind of focused, strategic research that we should be supporting." Mikulski did question whether the investment in IT^2 would crowd out investment in other key NSF priorities, and whether it would create a new digital divide. She said we have to be sure that this does not happen.

Colwell noted that the IT^2 initiative was developed in response to a recent report by the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee (PITAC) which concluded that "federal support for long-term research on information technology has been 'dangerously inadequate.'" She said the new initiative is a long-term investment that "will strengthen the entire research and education enterprise. It will deliver tools and capabilities that will benefit every field, every discipline, and every level of education." Lane noted that earlier initiatives and programs, like the KDI and the HPCC, are still important administration priorities, but IT^2 is in response to the recognized need to invest more in long-term research. He said that we must "invest in the future today."

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A Need for Balance

Aside from IT^2, Burns expressed great interest in the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) program. He noted that EPSCoR was a program that has "really done the job." The program, he said, has had a huge impact on small states and allows these states to be involved in the research and development community. He expressed concern, however, that the administration did not request an increase for EPSCoR in FY 2000.

Bond echoed Burns' praise of EPSCoR and also expressed concern about the disparity in federal research funding between large and small institutions, a "rich get richer, while the poor get poorer" scenario. Bond noted that Congress needs to promote a balanced research portfolio to ensure that "all Americans have the opportunity prosper." Colwell agreed and further noted that there has been a sharp shift toward investment in biomedical research. While this research has produced positive benefits, she noted that the "society cannot live on biomedical bread alone."

At the hearing's conclusion, Mikulski noted that she is excited by the new initiatives in the FY 2000 budget request, but is worried about the well-being of the basic sciences. She expressed concern that young scientists are not getting funds. "We must recruit these young people into graduate schools and encourage them to get advanced degrees," concluded Mikulski.

OJP HEAD APPEARS BEFORE SENATE JUDICIARY SUBCOMMITTEE; TALKS ABOUT OJP REORGANIZATION

Language in the Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 Omnibus Appropriations bill required the Assistant Attorney General of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to provide Congress a reorganization plan for OJP. The

report was ordered due to congressional concern over redundancy and overlapping functions at OJP. Senator Jeff Sessions (R-AL), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee Youth Violence Subcommittee, convened a March 25 hearing to discuss OJP's reorganization plan, as well as the Clinton Administration's FY 2000 budget request. During the hearing, Sessions expressed great interest in OJP's plan for reorganization, while offering criticisms of the administration's request.

Laurie Robinson, Assistant Attorney General of OJP, told Sessions that the recently submitted reorganization report "outlines a streamlined OJP, structured around functions." She noted that the plan envisions three things: 1) centralization of OJP's research effort; 2) centralization of OJP's statistical programs; and 3) centralization of OJP's information and dissemination efforts, to pool expertise in one area to more effectively assist state and local law enforcement officials. The new structure, she said, would also include a revised system for managing and distributing formula grant funds.

Sessions expressed guarded optimism about the restructuring, exclaiming that it "showed great potential." He noted, however, that since there have been a number of grant programs created over the past 25 years, OJP might find it difficult to effectively administer all these grants. Consequently, he suggested that OJP may need to consolidate all the disparate grants (55, according to Robinson) into one large grant. In response, Robinson told Sessions that the reorganization plan does not call for consolidation of all the grants into one, but pools the grants into several different subject areas, like juvenile crime grants, technology grants, and law enforcement grants.

Chairman Criticizes Budget Request

While excited about the reorganization plan, Sessions expressed "disappointment" with the Clinton Administration's FY 2000 budget request. He was specifically bothered by the administration's plan to not fund (or "zero out") two popular block grant programs, and significantly reduce a third block grant program.

As noted in the March 22 issue of *UPDATE*, the administration provided no funds for the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant program (LLEBG). The administration also decided to zero out the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant program (JAIBG), and severely cut the Violent Offender Incarceration and Truth-In-Sentencing (VOI-TIS) Formula Grant program. The latter saw its requested funding level fall to $75 million from $720.5 million in FY 2000 request.

Sessions described the cuts as "damaging" and a "big setback for local law enforcement efforts." He said, "I believe the President's decision to eliminate funding for these programs is wrongheaded. The budget . . . will result in an undercutting of the ability of state and local law enforcement entities to combat crime in communities throughout this nation." He noted that he will strongly urge his counterparts to provide funds for these programs.

Herb Kohl, Ranking Member on the Subcommittee, stated that "in the end, we all know that the [LLEBG] and the [JAIBG] will get funded. And they should. . ." He noted, however, that as block grant programs they should offer local law enforcement officials flexibility. In Kohl's opinion, these three block grants do not provide sufficient flexibility and do not provide a balanced approach to fighting crime. Kohl specifically criticized the LLEBG and the JAIBG for providing little or no funds for crime prevention.

At the hearing, Kohl announced that he has introduced a bill, the "21st Century Safe and Sound Communities Act", as a more balanced and flexible crime fighting approach. The bill, said Kohl, would help stop juvenile crime by hiring 50,000 new police officers, building new juvenile jails, and cracking down on juveniles who carry guns.

IS WELFARE REFORM WORKING?: COSSA BRIEFING CONSIDERS 1996 WELFARE ACT

COSSA kicked off its 1999 Congressional Briefing series on March 12. A crowd of nearly 150 people attended the briefing, "Is Welfare Reform Working? The Impact of Economic Growth and Policy Changes." The event, cosponsored by the Joint Center for Poverty Research at the University of Chicago/Northwestern University, featured three prominent social scientists: Sheldon Danziger, from the University of Michigan; Robert Moffit, from Johns Hopkins University; and LaDonna Pavetti, from Mathematica Policy Research.

The three discussed the impacts of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 which replaced the 60 year old Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant (TANF). The new act was a marked departure from the AFDC. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act imposed time limits on welfare benefits, strengthened work requirements, and gave states a much greater role in determining and providing benefits.

The Caseload Decline: A False Indicator?

After a brief welcome by COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver, **Sheldon Danziger**, Henry J. Meyer Collegiate Professor of Social Work and Public Policy at the University of Michigan, stated that if one wants a quick answer to the question — Is welfare reform working? — he would answer that the new act has "been more successful in reducing the caseload than most people would have thought when it was signed by the president in 1996." He attributed this decline in part to the strong United States economy. However, with respect to the question of whether the 1996 welfare act has been successful in making recipients "better off," Danziger stated that the "results are not that promising."

Danziger argued that far too much attention is paid to the decreasing number of cases, without fully understanding how the recipients are fairing. The decline in caseloads, he argued, may belie the actual situation. He cited a recent *New York Times* article that noted that West Virginia counts child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits as income. This accounting system has rendered a large number of recipients ineligible for TANF. So, while cases may have declined in West Virginia, this is one example of how "we can cut the caseload without affecting a recipient's well-being," said Danziger.

Danziger discussed labor markets and seemingly came to the conclusion that the news is not all good. He noted that research has shown that even in these prosperous economic times, "it looks like about a third of those who are leaving the welfare roles are not working." Danziger said that many of those that do find jobs "are only in part-time jobs at relatively low wages." Many people who leave welfare do not earn more than they did while receiving public assistance. Additionally, many people who leave welfare are low-skilled and often fit the classic example of "last hired and first fired."

He noted that one policy implication of the 1996 welfare act is "the importance of having some sort of community work experience." He said that providing community work would allow welfare recipients to have some way to work for their benefit when the Nation's economy is not as healthy as it is now.

The Caseload Decline: Reasons and Determinants

Robert Moffitt, Professor of Economics at Johns Hopkins University, focused his discussion on the causes and determinants in the decline in the welfare caseload. He also spent a portion of his discussion considering the cyclicality of welfare cases, whether the caseload increases or decreases as a function of the state of the U.S. economy.

The caseload, according to Moffitt, has declined between 40 and 44 percent between January 1993 and September 1998. This decline, he remarked, is "unprecedented if you look at the ups and downs of the AFDC caseload since 1935." He said that while much research has focused on the contributions of reform to the caseload decline, the reductions actually started before welfare reform was enacted in 1996. Specifically, Moffitt pointed to state welfare systems as a possible explanation. States, he said, had been requesting welfare waivers since the 1980s, and many states requested waivers around the time welfare

reform was enacted. These waivers, he said, had many of the same elements of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act.

Moffitt noted that the decline in the unemployment rate and the decline in the caseload have occurred at nearly the same time. He noted that trend lines for AFDC caseloads per capita, the Nation's unemployment rate, and the number of states with welfare waivers, indicate a possible relationship. The trend lines show, said Moffitt, that the AFDC per capita caseload experienced a large increase in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and then started to decline. He noted that the unemployment rate experienced a peak in the early 1990s only to experience a decline throughout the rest of the 1990s. Trends also show that the AFDC caseload declined concurrently with an increase in states approved for welfare waivers. "So piecing out the relative contributions of the waivers and the unemployment rate to the decline in caseload has been a major question," said Moffitt.

He then briefly discussed some studies that considered the relative contributions the unemployment rate and the states' waivers had in the AFDC caseload decline. He pointed to a May 1997 study performed by Council of Economic Advisers that determined the relative contribution of each of these factors to the decline in welfare cases. The CEA study, said Moffitt, found that the decline in the unemployment rate between 1993 and 1996 accounted for 31 to 44 percent of the decline, while State waivers explained 14 to 30 percent of the decline. These numbers, however, have been hotly debated and subsequent research has disagreed with these figures, said Moffitt.

Three new studies have come to close consensus on the contribution of the unemployment rate to the decline in welfare cases between 1993 and 1996, according to Moffitt. The studies note that the unemployment rate during this period can explain 48 percent, or about one-half, of the AFDC caseload decline. There was less agreement between these studies on the impact of state waivers. The midpoint range, however, was that state waivers accounted for 15 percent of the AFDC caseload decline.

Moffitt noted that there are still many unresolved issues. For instance, he said that there are questions regarding the cyclicality of welfare cases to the state of the U.S. economy and business cycle. He said the number of welfare cases has been getting more sensitive to the business cycle over time. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act may reduce the sensitivity of the number of welfare cases to cycles of the U.S. economy, he concluded.

What the States are Doing

LaDonna Pavetti, a Senior Researcher at Mathematica Policy Research, led a discussion of what states are doing now and what they are likely to do when they face an economic recession. First, though, she provided her answer to the question: Is welfare reform working? She stated that it is too soon to answer the question. She specifically noted that "until [the U.S.] experiences an economic down turn, we won't know what this new welfare system actually looks like." She did state, however, that she does not believe that "we have a system in place yet that is stable." We have a lot to learn, she said. She did place a lot of the apparent success on the current state of the U.S. economy. She stated that many of the states' current policies would not work without a strong economy.

She then turned to the states' welfare programs and discussed some of their similarities. One aspect that is consistent throughout most of the programs, she said, is support for job search programs. There is, said Pavetti, quite a variance in the different programs — some provide a lot of assistance and others provide very little assistance. She also pointed out that most of the states place an emphasis on programs that instill job retention and job advancement strategies. She said that states are also putting a lot of energy and resources into job support, such as child care and transportation support. Finally, Pavetti noted that states have made extensive use of sanctions, "particularly full family sanctions and time limits, to send a message that this is a very different environment and work is expected."

Pavetti proceeded to review and comment on some of the literature that has been written on welfare reform, particularly papers presented at a November

1998 conference of the Joint Center for Poverty Research. Through consideration of some of the conference's papers, she came to several conclusions about the current welfare system. First, she noted that states vary greatly in the amount of funds they have in reserve or in contingency funds. Second, and perhaps related, she noted that the states vary in their preparedness for an economic recession. Many states, she said, would deplete their funds quickly if the U.S. went into a severe recession. Finally, she stated that "the basic situation that we are going to find ourselves is one in which there are not enough resources for states to continue to do everything they are doing now."

She proceeded to consider some of the decisions and choices states would have if there was a down turn in the economy. States, she said, would have to reconsider community service and subsidized employment as work. Second, states may have to reduce the number of people expected to fulfill work requirements. Pavetti also questioned whether states would have to reconsider education and training programs as a viable part of their welfare systems. She also wondered whether, in times of economic decline, states would be able to provide generous work support programs. If not, she asked, what types of mechanisms would be put in place to distribute scarce resources? She also noted that states would have to reassess their time limits.

In conclusion, Pavetti noted that the best thing states can do is work to create a broad-based program. She said they should build a strong foundation now in the event of an economic downturn.

Edited transcripts of the briefing will be available soon. Contact COSSA for more information.

PREWITT APPEARS BEFORE HOUSE APPROPRIATORS FOR FIRST TIME (cont.)

not understand why the Census Bureau has not provided the Subcommittee with a final dollar amount. He said that he has been "pleading for the last three years" and providing millions of dollars to get a figure, and still the Census Bureau "has not delivered."

Rogers noted that the Bureau's inability to provide an actual operating cost "has put this Subcommittee in a bind." At one point, Rogers asked Prewitt if he know how the Appropriations Committee and the government worked. He admonished Prewitt that the Bureau's inability to provide funding figures threatens a partial-government shutdown. Rogers asked Prewitt if it bothered him that the Bureau could cause the Supreme Court justices to go without pay and United States' embassies to go without security. This was a reference to an agreement contained within the Fiscal Year 1999 Omnibus Appropriations bill (See *UPDATE*, October 26, 1998) that cuts off funding to the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and the State by June 15, 1999 if the House and the Clinton Administration do not come to an agreement on the operational plan for the 2000 Census. There has been recent talk, though, that Congress may push back the deadline.

One Democratic member of the Subcommittee, Julian Dixon (CA), told Prewitt that the census issue has become a political one, not one based on which method will provide the best count. He further explained that it is the Republicans' job to attack the Census Bureau. "It's a war," said Dixon, "don't give them any ammunition." Dixon noted that the longer it takes for the Census Bureau to provide the Subcommittee with a final cost figure, the more the Republicans will attack you and exploit the issue.

As has become his familiar role, Representative Dan Miller (R-FL), a member of the CJS Appropriations Subcommittee and chairman of the Census Subcommittee, attacked the administration's planned use of scientific statistical sampling in the next head count. Miller expressed his disappointment that "politics is driving" this issue, which is "very sad and unfortunate."

At the conclusion of the more than three hour hearing, Rogers told Prewitt this "Subcommittee does not trust this administration," and will remain suspicious of political manipulation in the 2000 Census until the Bureau provides the Subcommittee with a final cost figure for the census.

EDUCATION SECRETARY INTENDS TO ESTABLISH COMMISSION ON MATH AND SCIENCE TEACHING

In a step to improve mathematics and science instruction in K-12 education, Secretary of Education Richard Riley recently announced his intention to establish the National Commission on Mathematics and Science Teaching for the 21st Century.

The Commission will be charged to review the current state of United States K-12 mathematics and science education. The focus of the new Commission will be on the ever-increasing challenges of teacher recruitment, preparation, retention, and professional growth, as well as to articulate the steps needed to strengthen the classroom practice of math and science teachers. The Commission will issue a final report to the Secretary of Education on September 30, 1999 describing specific steps that federal, state, and local policymakers can take to address math and science teacher supply and quality issues. The final report, which the Secretary will share with the President and the Congress, will include a detailed statement of the findings and conclusions, as well as the Commission's recommendations.

The Commission will consist of 20 members to be appointed by the Secretary of Education. The membership will be chosen from, but not limited to the following groups: current or recent members of Congress, Governors, Mayors, State Legislators, Chief State School Officers, Nobel laureates, Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), University presidents, principals, teachers, parents, students, public representatives, and other distinguished leaders in the fields of mathematics and sciences. The Commission will also include several ex-officio, non-voting members, including: the Secretary of Education, or his designee, the Secretaries of Defense, Energy, and Transportation, the NASA Administrator, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Director of the National Science Foundation, and the President of the National Academy of Sciences.

For more information about the Commission, contact Linda Rosen, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202, Telephone: 202/205-9891.

DECREASING THE GAP: NIEHS DEVELOPING A RESEARCH AGENDA ON SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in an effort to generate ideas and stimulate discussion to formulate a research agenda designed to enhance the understanding of how socioeconomic status (SES) and hazardous environment exposure interact and contribute to disparities in health, is sponsoring a series of regional workshops. The initial workshop was held January 20-22 in Oakland, California with two additional workshops being planned for May 26-28 in Baltimore, Maryland and July 7-9 in Chicago, Illinois.

The Institute is seeking social and behavioral scientists to participate in the workshops, particularly in the breakout discussions. The breakout sessions will include such topics as: health policy trends, activities, and needs; scientific research and data collection needs; effective models for addressing SES and environmental health; prevention plans and strategies; community participation in research approaches; environmentally induced psychosocial stress and its impact on health; and occupation and environmental health hazards across socioeconomic strata.

For more information, contact Michelle Beckner, Conference Coordinator, Telephone: 703/902-1269, Fax: 703/821-2098, Email: mbeckner@circsol.com.

Check out COSSA's updated webpage for more information about the Consortium, our newsletter, and transcripts of our past Congressional briefings and Annual Meetings. The webpage also provides links to our Members, Affiliates, Contributors, as well as many relevant federal agencies. The address is:

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

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