

Consortium of Social Science Associations

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CONGRESS CLEARS BUDGET RESOLUTION: ON TO APPROPRIATIONS *HS*

Congress has met its statutory deadline and cleared the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 budget resolution by April 15. The Senate, by a vote of 50-48, and the House, by a vote of 220-208, both largely along party lines, adopted the conference report on the resolution on April 14. As noted previously in *UPDATE*, the budget resolution sets parameters for the actual spending decisions made by the appropriators. Following a Spring break, Congress will return and get to work making those spending allocations among the Federal government's various agencies and programs.

The conference agreement calls for \$600.2 billion for discretionary spending. The Senate added an extra \$4 billion to the pot during its deliberations on the bill and the House accepted it in conference, particularly since the additional funds are for defense spending. This leaves defense discretionary spending at \$310.8 billion, close to a \$21 billion increase from last year's resolution. Non-defense discretionary spending, which includes non-defense science and technology programs, would receive \$289.4 billion, almost \$7 billion below last year's level. House Appropriations Chairman Representative C.W. Bill Young (R-FL) has noted that these limits may fall by the wayside when the administration presses for its priorities later in the process.

Despite the reduction in non-defense discretionary spending, both Houses took note of science funding. The Senate voted that the FY 2001 budget for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) should increase by \$2.7 billion or 15 percent, keeping it on the budget-doubling-in-five-years-track. However, the amendment did not make it into the conference agreement. The House, on the other hand, passed a Sense-of-the-House amendment to the resolution noting the importance of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to the Nation. For

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SOCIAL SCIENCE AT NSF HEARING *HS*

After ruminating about things in modern society that were disturbing to him, including dumbing down of education, coarsening of civil life, acceptance of too much violence, prurient sex on the Internet, Chairman Jim Walsh (R-NY) asked National Science Foundation (NSF) Director Rita Colwell: What is NSF doing in the social sciences? Thus, these sciences entered the discussion as NSF defended its Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 budget before the House VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee on April 4.

Director Colwell responded by declaring that the social, behavioral and economic sciences (SBE) are "an important component of NSF." She mentioned the plan to develop a major initiative in these sciences for the Foundation's FY 2003 budget. With the development of large data bases and the new technology to analyze them, Colwell proclaimed the SBE sciences were "ready to explode" with exciting new research opportunities. She noted that NSF, in partnership with NIH, supported research in cognitive science to gain new insights into learning and other aspects of human behavior. National Science Board Chairman Eamon Kelly, former President of Tulane University and an

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economist by training, joined the discussion to talk about the social and economic impact and consequences of the explosion in information technology. He too emphasized the importance of new databases and new tools to analyze them. He suggested that leaps forward in these areas would lead to more acceptance of social and behavioral science results by policymakers. Kelly also mentioned the importance of the social and behavioral sciences to learning.

Later in the hearing, Norman Bradburn, new Assistant Director for SBE, was called upon to respond to Representative Marcy Kaptur's (D-OH) concern about NSF activity regarding mental health. Bradburn referred to the increased emphasis on cognitive neuroscience research in SBE's Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences division. It is slated for a \$10 million increase in FY 2001. The new AD also cited the technological advances to conduct research on the brain and the use of these tools by behavioral and cognitive scientists.

Aside from the discussion of the social and behavioral sciences, the hearing focused on the proposed \$4.6 billion budget for NSF in FY 2001. Chairman Walsh called the proposed \$675 million or 17 percent boost, "a robust submission." He suggested that the 302(b) allocation to the Subcommittee "may not allow us to fully fund the request." (See Budget story on page 7). Walsh noted the bipartisan support for NSF on the panel

CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Executive Director:	Howard J. Silver
Public Affairs:	David A. Hess
Government Affairs:	Angela L. Sharpe
Administrative Officer:	Karen E. Carrion
President:	Alfred Blumstein

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and said that the Subcommittee would do the best it could concerning the funding.

Colwell: Double NSF's Budget in Five Years

Colwell responded that the large increase for FY 2001 was a first step to significantly increase the NSF budget. She said "NSF is much too small by a factor of 2," announcing that she wants to double NSF's funding in the next five years, similar to the current campaign for NIH. Kelly supported Colwell by decrying the "egregious underfunding of basic research in this country." Both emphasized the need to increase the size and duration of NSF grants.

Other issues raised in the hearing included: the ability to manage large funding increases, new initiatives such as nanotechnology vs. core disciplinary research, science education, the role of community colleges and the Advanced Technology Education program, graduate fellowships, diversity in the workplace, the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCOR), ecological and climate change research, plant genome research and genetically modified organisms.

NSF will get to tell its story to the counterpart Senate Appropriations Subcommittee in early May.

COSSA PRESIDENT BLUMSTEIN TESTIFIES ON NSF FUNDING *HS*

On April 12 COSSA President Alfred Blumstein, University Professor and J.Erik Jonsson Professor of Urban Systems and Operations Research at Carnegie Mellon University, represented COSSA in its annual appearance before the House VA, HUD, Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. Blumstein, who is also the director of the National Consortium on Violence Research (NCOVR), spoke of COSSA's strong support for the administration's requested budget of \$4.6 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2001. He noted that the proposed \$675 million, or 17.3 percent, increase "will return many-fold its value in economic growth,

help save lives, promote prosperity, and improve society.”

Blumstein also urged the Subcommittee to provide the full increase for NSF so that the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) could enjoy its proposed 20 percent boost next year. He suggested that the large requested increase for the directorate “reflects the fact that an increasing amount of our society’s problems are falling within the domain of SBE.” His written testimony provided many examples of past successes in SBE-sponsored research as well as exciting new challenges that SBE support will focus on in the coming years.

The COSSA President also mentioned NCOVR’s role in conducting research on the causes of violent behavior and disseminating those research results to policy makers and practitioners. He also suggested that NCOVR, as a “virtual” center, with its collaborators in many different institutions across the country and overseas, has found ways to use modern telecommunications and computer technology to enable the best researchers in the field to work together on these problems. The research, Blumstein told the Subcommittee, has “given rise to important findings in the area of domestic violence, violence in public housing, the interaction between youth violence and drug markets, the role of gangs, and other factors that distinguish individual situations and places likely to generate violence compared to those that do not.”

See the COSSA web site (www.cossa.org) for a complete copy of the testimony.

PREWITT RELATES IMPORTANCE OF DATA AND LONG FORM REPLACEMENT *DH*

Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt has been busy recently. Aside from overseeing the Nation’s “largest peace time mobilization,” he appeared on April 5 before an oversight hearing of the House Census Subcommittee. The next day he appeared before the House Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Subcommittee to defend his agency’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 budget request. As expected, both hearings touched on the recent

troubles regarding the long form. Additionally, members of both committees showed interest in the data products of the Census and the American Community Survey, the apparent replacement to the long form in the 2010 Census.

Appearing before Chairman Dan Miller (R-FL) and the House Census Subcommittee, the Census Bureau Director noted that operational aspects of the census were going well and that he was “cautiously optimistic” that the Bureau would achieve the targeted 61 percent response rate upon which it based its budget and staffing numbers. (On April 11, the Census Bureau reported that the national response rate had reached 62 percent.)

While optimistic about the national response rate, Prewitt expressed concern with the long form response rate which is lagging the short form’s by 12 percent. A disparity is expected, said Prewitt, but this gap is much more than that of the 1990 census (roughly 4.5 percent, according to a National Academy of Sciences’ report). Prewitt told the Subcommittee that the recent comments regarding the intrusiveness of the long form have had a negative impact. Representative Danny Davis (D-IL) concurred with Prewitt and noted that long form nonresponse has occurred because of the “power of suggestion” of public officials who have spoken strongly against its intrusiveness (See *UPDATE*, April 3, 2000, Number 6).

Chairman Miller and Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) indicated their beliefs that long form nonresponse was due in large part because of legitimate privacy concerns. Miller put a lot of the blame on the Internet and computer-based society. He said that while both computer technology and the Internet “have brought tremendous conveniences to our lives, grown our economy . . . they each have also brought new privacy concerns.”

Regardless of the reasons for the lowered long form response, Prewitt said that if the gap is not closed data products will be compromised. He added that high item nonresponse — answering certain questions on the long form and not others — “will greatly affect the Nation for 10 years.” He expressed concern that high item nonresponse would compromise the reliability and overall quality of the data produced through the long form. The Bureau,

he said, would not release data that fall below its threshold level of quality. The Consumer Price Index (CPI), Social Security payments, Federal Title I education money for disadvantaged students, and Head Start funds are all partly dependent on data gleaned from the long form. All of these functions and more, said Prewitt, would be impacted by a poor response rate. "Data," Prewitt said, "is the infrastructure of our society."

During the hearing, Miller stated that the American Community Survey (ACS) would replace the long-form by the 2010 Census. The ACS is a monthly survey of 250,000 households currently in development in 31 sites across the Nation (See *UPDATE*, February 7, 2000, Number 3). When nationally implemented in 2003, said Prewitt, the ACS will make the next census "simpler" and make "it possible to provide detailed socioeconomic and housing data throughout the decade." The ACS is the "cornerstone of our effort to keep pace with ever-increasing demands for timely and relevant data," said Prewitt. Even though the questions on the ACS are largely the same as those on the long form, Prewitt indicated that the Bureau would work with local government officials to demonstrate the value of the information.

During the Commerce, Justice, State (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee hearing, Prewitt noted that the Congress should not go down the "road of the ACS" if it is not prepared to continuously pay for the survey. Prewitt told CJS Subcommittee Chair Harold Rogers (R-KY) and Subcommittee members that the ACS would be a large and costly survey, but that he is confident the Bureau would be able to run it successfully. The FY 2001 request includes \$25 million for the ACS. Although the Bureau has not officially stated an overall cost for the yearly ACS, the total would be much more than the current request.

NATIONAL READING PANEL RELEASES REPORT

DH

On April 13 the National Reading Panel released its long-awaited report specifying the most effective ways to teach children how to learn to read. The Panel found that children must be taught

a combination of things — including phonemic awareness skills, phonics skills, guided oral reading, and reading comprehension strategies — in order to become good readers.

The report, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*, was the subject of a hearing of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee held the day of the report's release. Appearing before the Subcommittee were National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Director Duane Alexander, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement Kent McGuire, and National Reading Panel Chairman and Chancellor of the University of Maryland System Donald Langenberg.

The Panel and the Process

The National Reading Panel was established through a provision inserted in the Fiscal Year 1998 funding bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies. Congress asked the NICHD Director, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, to convene a panel of experts to "assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read." The panel, comprised of 14 members, includes leading scientists in reading research, representatives of colleges of education, reading teachers, education administrators, and parents.

To determine the topics of study, the Panel used as a foundation the National Research Council's 1998 report *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. It also took into account the ideas and concerns of teachers, parents, and students by holding five regional hearings. Based on these hearings, the NRC report, and panel discussions, the body settled on five topics for intensive study: (1) alphabets (phonemic awareness and phonics instruction), (2) fluency, (3) comprehension (vocabulary instruction, text comprehension instruction, teacher preparation and comprehension strategies instruction), (4) teacher education and

reading instruction, and (5) computer technology and reading instruction.

After an examination of public databases, including PsycINFO and the Department of Education's Educational Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), Panel staff identified 100,000 research studies completed since 1966, and 15,000 before 1966. Using a comprehensive, formal, evidence-based analyses, however, the Panel found that "only a small fraction of the total reading research literature met the its standards for use in the topic analyses." Responding to a question by Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), who chaired the Subcommittee hearing, about the quality of the research reviewed, Sally Shaywitz, a panel member from Harvard University, questioned the quality of educational research. She noted that the majority of studies in education research have not been subject to the rigorous scientific standards of the other sciences. "We have a lot of work to do" to increase the quality of education research.

The Findings

"For the first time, we now have guidance, — based on evidence from sound scientific research — on how best to teach children to read. The panel's rigorous scientific review identifies the most effective strategies for teaching reading," said NICHD's Alexander. Specifically, the Panel determined that effective reading instruction includes teaching children to break apart and manipulate the sounds in words, teaching them that those sounds are represented by letters of the alphabet which can then be blended together to form words, having them practice what they've learned by reading aloud with guidance and feedback (guided oral reading), and applying strategies to guide and improve reading comprehension.

In addition, the report indicated the need for additional research on several different areas. Three specific areas in need of more rigorous experimental and qualitative research included: (1) the learning needs of students with learning disabilities, (2) teacher education and training, and (3) the uses of technology in teaching reading.

Alexander and OERI's McGuire noted that the next step was to ensure that the Panel's findings

made it to those who will use them: the teachers. To fulfill this challenge, Alexander said that the Panel would work with teachers' organizations, State governors and elected officials, and State education officials to get the findings of the report to teachers, as well as to teachers' colleges and universities. To view a copy of the Panel's nearly 500 page report, go to the National Reading Panel's web site at: www.nationalreadingpanel.com or the NICHD's web site at: www.nichd.nih.gov.

HEALTH DISPARITIES DISCUSSED AT NIH COUNCIL OF PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES AS

Health disparities was among the topics discussed at the April 6 meeting of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Public Representatives (COPR). Acting Deputy Director Yvonne Maddox gave COPR members an overview of NIH's current efforts. Former NIH Director Harold Varmus initiated the health disparities discussion at the inaugural meeting of the group April 21, 1999 (See *UPDATE*, May 3, 1999, Number 8).

According to Maddox, the NIH is looking at areas other than those identified by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in response to the President's Race Initiative. The Health Disparities Initiative includes a five-step plan that sets as a national goal the elimination of health disparities in six areas by the year 2010. The six areas — infant mortality, cancer screening and management, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, and immunizations — were chosen because they are the areas in which racial and ethnic minorities experience "serious disparities in health access and outcomes." These areas were chosen not only because they represent significant disparities, and any improvement would have a significant impact in terms of overall health status of the affected communities, but also because good baseline data is now available that will allow for monitoring the progress being made.

Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General David Satcher and Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation Margaret Hamburg are leading HHS' campaign which has been reaching

out to local communities, churches, nurses, physicians, community-based programs, and experts in minority health. The goals are included in Healthy People 2010, which sets the Nation's health goals to be accomplished by that year. The Department acknowledges that advances in medicine and increased access to care can only partially address the difficult, complex, and often controversial issues surrounding racial and ethnic disparities in health status.

In response to the Secretary's HHS Initiative, Varmus established a trans-NIH Working Group on Health Disparities in September 1999. Subsequent to the creation of the Working Group, Varmus directed each Institute, as well as Offices within the Office of the Director (OD), to participate in the establishment of a strategic plan for health disparities research. Acting NIH Director Ruth Kirchstein charged the group to come up with a strategic plan for each of the individual Institutes, with all plans due by April 3, 2000. The NIH will take parts of each of the Institutes' plans and come up with a single NIH-wide strategic plan. The Advisory Committee to the Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) will review the completed NIH plan and submit it to Kirchstein for discussion at the NIH's Fiscal Year 2002 annual budget retreat scheduled for June. The trans-NIH plan-of-action will be tied to the agency's budget planning process.

Maddox, along with National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease Anthony Fauci, have been appointed by Kirchstein to chair the NIH's strategic planning group. The group's goals include: developing a five-year strategic research agenda; recruiting, training, and career development opportunities for minority investigators both in the extramural community and at NIH; advancing community outreach activities; bridging and forming partnerships; defining, coding, tracking, analyzing and evaluating progress; and enhancing public awareness. The NIH-wide plan will also focus on expanding the recruitment of minority participants in clinical research and clinical trials, and calls for "establishing new partnerships with industry, foundations, and other Federal agencies." Initially, said Maddox, the NIH will focus on racial/ethnic minority populations (African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics and Latinos, Native Americans, and Native Alaskans).

One of the most difficult tasks the planning group has faced has been defining "health disparities" for the purposes of NIH, said Maddox. It is in the middle of many issues, she continued. Accordingly, it has been difficult to describe what NIH is doing. So the group worked not only on defining health disparities, but on how to code, track, analyze, and evaluate the data. According to Maddox, the NIH definition of health disparities is: "*differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the United States.*" Research on health disparities related to socioeconomic status is also included in the NIH definition. NIH must be able to say what the health disparities are and how much is being spent Maddox emphasized. All of this information will eventually be available on the NIH's web site, said Maddox.

Maddox apprised COPR members of the congressional interest in this topic. She referred to three bills that are currently awaiting committee hearings: H.R. 2391, the National Center for Research on Domestic Health Disparities Act, introduced by Representatives Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL); H.R. 3250, the Health Care Fairness Act of 1999, introduced by Representatives John Lewis (D-GA) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS); and S. 1880, the Health Care Fairness Act of 1999, introduced by Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA). In addition to these pieces of legislation, Maddox also noted that the NIH had included in this year's budget submission to Congress a \$20 million request to create an "administrative center to jump start this initiative."

Maddox concluded that the NIH will hold a trans-NIH health fair June 2 -3, 2000 on the NIH campus; Surgeon General David Satcher has been invited. The fair will focus on children, for it is in childhood that one finds indicators of adult disease, concluded Maddox.

OBSSR SEEKS MORE MINORITY SCIENTISTS *AS*

The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) has launched a web-based project to

increase the number of minority scientists in the behavioral and social sciences. NIH grantees who are interested in mentoring minority students are encouraged to visit the web site and add their name and information about their research program to OBSSR's database. Once there is an adequate number of principle investigators (PIs) in the database, OBSSR will invite minority students to search the site for potential mentors. Applicants will then have an opportunity to submit an application directly to a mentor via the site. PIs will then contact the NIH Institute awarding their grant to see if an administrative supplement is available. Working through the 25 Institutes and Centers, OBSSR will use an established NIH grant mechanism - the Research Supplements for Underrepresented Minorities program. For more information, see OBSSR'S website: www4.od.nih.gov/research/.

COSSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ADDRESSES COLUMBIA CONFERENCE ON DATA NEEDS *HS*

On March 31 COSSA Executive Director Howard Silver gave the keynote address at a Columbia University conference: *Information and Democratic Society: Representing and Conveying Quantitative Data*. In his talk on "Data Needs in the Social Sciences," Silver noted that gathering and analyzing more data and information, particularly longitudinal in character, and connecting that data together in multidisciplinary, cross-national and sophisticated ways, will help us understand better an increasingly technology-driven environment where interactions among human beings will still dominate.

He suggested that many might conclude that more than enough data have been or are being collected to examine any question, and that increases in information technology have made them accessible as well. Data collected by the government, by others with government support, and by the private sector, and the archiving of much of that information, all contribute to a sense of "overload." Yet, Silver stressed there are still barriers to "information on everybody and everything connected to social, economic, and

political behavior, individually and collectively, in all countries." He categorized these barriers around the issues of access, linkage, confidentiality and non-responses, missing topics, and funding. In discussing each of these, Silver suggested that advances are occurring, but tough questions remain.

The speech is available on the COSSA web site: www.cossa.org. For further information about the conference go to: www.columbia.edu/cu/news/00/04/gsas.html.

Budget Resolution Story (continued from page 1)

Function 250, which includes NSF, NASA, and Energy Science, the budget resolution provided \$20.3 billion, a \$1 billion increase over last year's resolution.

The budget resolution also includes language that allows parliamentary restraints against some of the gimmicks Congress has used in previous years to bypass some of the resolution's constraints. Point of orders can now be made against advanced appropriations totaling more than \$23.5 billion and against designating any non-defense spending as "emergency spending," as occurred with the funding for the Constitutionally-mandated Census in the FY 2000 budget.

The focus now switches to the so-called 302(b) allocations, where the appropriations committees divide the pie among the 13 subcommittees. Preliminary numbers suggest that the Labor, HHS, Education panel, funder of NIH, will get a significant boost, while the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies, allocator for NSF, will get a reduction from last year. Whether these decisions hold as the process moves on — last year the allocation process constantly underwent revisions — is unclear.

COSSA Congressional Testimony

See COSSA's webpage for full texts of COSSA's testimony before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees:

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CONTRIBUTORS

American Council of Learned Societies
American Institutes for Research
University of Arizona
Bowling Green State University
Brookings Institution
Brown University
University of California, Berkeley
University of California, Davis
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
