

**CONGRESS MOVES APPROPRIATIONS
BILLS** *HS*

With time short in this election year-Congress the Republican leadership has begun an ambitious schedule of considering the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 appropriations bills. Both the House and Senate hope to have all the bills through the committee process, with many completing floor action, before July 4. This fast-track-scenario may get stuck over disagreements with the Democrats on spending priorities and threatened vetoes from the White House (see other story).

In the first week of action, the Military Construction and Agriculture bills made it through the full appropriations committees in the House and Senate. The huge Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill, usually one of the last to be considered, came early in the process this year, and has passed the full committee in the Senate and the subcommittee in the House. The Transportation and Legislative Branch bills have emerged from their House subcommittees, while the Foreign Operations bill has been sent forward by the Senate subcommittee. The VA, HUD, Independent Agencies bill, which includes the National Science Foundation, and the Commerce, State, Justice bill are expected to see action commencing in late May.

**Labor, Health and Human Services,
and Education**

Since the Senate subcommittee had a significantly higher allocation to work with than the House subcommittee, the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)** received \$20.5 billion from the Senate committee, but only \$18.8 billion from the House committee. The Senate number reflects a \$2.7 billion increase over last year. The House number is the same as the President's request, \$1 billion more than the FY 2000 level. However, in

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**OMB DIRECTOR GIVES ADMINISTRATION'S
APPROPRIATIONS MESSAGE** *HS*

Speaking at the Urban Institute on May 2, on the eve of the GOP controlled Congress commencing the markups of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 spending bills, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Director Jack Lew presented the administration's views on this year's appropriations season.

As expected, Lew noted that the congressionally-passed budget resolution has created enormous problems for appropriators in developing bills that will meet the President's objectives. The spending differential for discretionary programs between the Congress and the President is about \$20 billion. Since both agree on increases in defense spending, the OMB director suggested that the congressional budget would cut most domestic discretionary spending by 10 percent below the President's budget request. "Unrealistic targets lead to unacceptable cuts," he said. Lew also decried the "oversized and irresponsible tax cut," contained in the budget resolution.

In providing examples of the forthcoming problems between the Congress and the White House, he focused on education and crime. He also spent considerable time talking about the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. This bill would be especially troublesome because of the commitment of the Congress and the President to

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increase spending on Veterans' Medical Care and to meet obligatory needs in the housing area.

This would leave "other key areas that appear to be shortchanged," including the National Science Foundation. Lew declared, that NSF could suffer a \$480 million reduction, "resulting in almost 18,000 fewer researchers, educators, and students receiving NSF support that is vital to the research and workforce needed for the Nation's future." This possible 11 percent cut certainly represents a "doomsday scenario." He also mentioned that under the Republican's budget no new resources could be available for long-term research in supercomputing and nanotechnology.

In the litany of the funding priorities most important to the White House, according to the OMB Director, science and technology remain in the top four. The administration, Lew noted, is taking a long-term view with a vision that emphasizes the importance of research and development, particularly in an era of surplus.

Lew's bottom line: "absent significant improvements to the appropriations and other bills, the President simply cannot and will not sign them." He vowed that the administration would "stick to our guns pretty hard." Asked about another October scenario, where the White House and the Congress would have last minute "budget crisis" negotiations, Lew hoped it was "possible not to repeat the past," but that he was "not optimistic."

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NSF AT SENATE APPROPRIATIONS: TIME TO DOUBLE THE BUDGET *HS/DK*

Senator Christopher "Kit" Bond (R-MO), chair of the Senate VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, warmly welcomed on May 4 National Science Foundation (NSF) Director Rita Colwell, National Science Board Chairman Eamon Kelly, and Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) Director Neal Lane to testify on their Fiscal Year (FY) 2001 budget requests.

Commending NSF for its work, Bond extolled the agency's many discoveries of knowledge since its creation in 1950 by "fellow Missourian" President Harry Truman. Bond said there is nothing more that he would like to do than provide NSF with the requested \$675 million, or 17 percent increase, for FY 2001. However, he reminded the audience that this is a "very difficult year for the Subcommittee." Moreover, the current allocation, he said, was not sufficient to provide the increase.

Bond and the Subcommittee's Ranking Democrat, Senator Barbara Mikulski (MD), also said they were "enthusiastic" and willing to champion Colwell's desire to double NSF's budget. Mikulski declared: "The science of today is the economic engine of tomorrow." Bond noted that he "was ready to sell" the doubling idea to his colleagues. Yet, he asked: "What are we selling?" Colwell responded in terms of the new initiatives that will "make the future better," such as nanotechnology.

Bond and Mikulski, however, both questioned NSF's capability to handle the coordinating role it has been given in the interagency nanotechnology initiative. Neal Lane assured the Subcommittee that NSF, working with the National Science and Technology Council, OSTP's interagency coordinating body, could provide the leadership for this project.

Bond raised several concerns about the NSF's FY 2001 budget request, including the agency's ability to handle such a large increase, particularly since the staff has not increased significantly. The Chairman also expressed his belief that the NSF's operations allow the "rich to get richer," while ignoring smaller research universities and colleges.

He wants NSF to pay more attention to this issue, since it would also make his "selling" job easier.

Mikulski also focused on this point. Citing the College of Notre Dame in Baltimore, which has received an NSF instrumentation grant, she declared that NSF needs to nurture the small undergraduate colleges that produce many science majors, and in particular, many K-12 science teachers.

Bond, whose Subcommittee has provided NSF with significant increases in recent years for plant genome research, also strongly defended biotechnology research that has produced the controversial genetically modified organisms. He called on America's scientific leadership, including NSF and OSTP, to answer the "misinformation spread by the media" on this topic.

The hearing was cut short because the Senators had to go find out about their allocation from the Appropriations Committee. The news, as foreshadowed by Bond's opening comments, was not good. However, there may be some adjustments as the appropriations' process proceeds that could provide relief to the Subcommittee and give it more maneuvering room to fund the agencies under its jurisdiction. According to the current schedule, the VA, HUD bill would be one of the last of the 13 funding bills to undergo mark up.

SUBCOMMITTEE DISCUSSES INDEPENDENT EDUCATION RESEARCH AGENCY *DH*

All hope is not lost for passing an Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) reauthorization bill before Congress adjourns this year. At least that is what the Chairman of the House Early Childhood, Youth, and Families Subcommittee of the House Education and Workforce Committee has said at two recent hearings. Representative Michael Castle (R-DE) has indicated that a bill authorizing the OERI, along with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the National Assessment Governing Board, (NAGB) could pass this year if Members of Congress worked in a bipartisan matter.

If Chairman Castle is right, however, and Congress does pass a bill, the OERI and the NCES may not look a lot like they currently do. At a May 4 hearing, the Subcommittee discussed possible scenarios for OERI reauthorization. On several different occasions, Castle was highly critical of the OERI. Questioning its organizational structure, including the Centers and the Regional Educational Laboratories, Castle noted his uncertainty that this is the proper way to organize the Federal government's educational research enterprise.

At a May 11 hearing of the Early Childhood, Youth, and Families Subcommittee, Castle expanded on earlier comments regarding the OERI's organizational structure. He suggested that the answer to OERI's problems is to make it a separate and independent entity from the Department of Education. As an independent agency OERI, said Castle, would be free from political pressures. He said the same regarding the independence of the NCES.

Speaking at the latter hearing, Chester Finn, former head of the OERI during the Bush Administration, echoed Castle's remarks and suggested creating an independent "Education Audit Agency" that would have authority for research, evaluation, statistics, and assessment. The new independent audit agency would also be responsible for the evaluation of education programs, a function currently performed by the Department's Planning and Evaluation Service. Evaluation, said Finn, must not be conducted by the Department that is actually implementing the programs. This creates a "conflict of interest" that an independent agency would address.

It appears that the idea of an independent OERI and NCES could have bipartisan support. At both the May 4 and May 11 Early Childhood, Youth, and Family Subcommittee hearings, Ranking Member Dale Kildee (D-MI) showed interest in the structure of the OERI as well as the possibility of crafting an insulated and independent educational research agency. Kildee, however, noted that he wasn't sure that the OERI had to be moved completely out of the Department to ensure its independence. He indicated his willingness to work with the Subcommittee Chair on possible solutions to the OERI reauthorization.

BILLS WOULD CREATE HEALTH DISPARITIES CENTER

AS

The discussion of how to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities and how best to facilitate the promotion of research in this area at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) moved back to Capitol Hill this week. On May 11, House Subcommittee on Health and Environment Chair Michael Bilirakis (R-FL) held a hearing on H.R. 3250, the Health Care Fairness Act, introduced by Representatives John Lewis (D-GA) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS). The bill would, among other things, create a "National Center for Research on Domestic Health Disparities." Such a center would "conduct and support basic and clinical research, training, the dissemination of health information, and other programs with respect to minority health."

According to the Chairman it was his hope that the hearing would "provide a clear picture of the Administration's perspective on the Health Care Fairness Act and proposals related to the Office of Minority Health in particular." The administration has not publically endorsed the bill, but in the President's FY 2001 budget request the NIH seeks legislative authority to allow a coordination center for health disparities within the NIH Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) along with \$20 million in funding.

Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General David Satcher informed the Subcommittee that the administration does not yet have a position on the bill, but is "strongly supportive of strategies and research targeted to disparities in health." ORMH Director John Ruffin and Kermit Smith of the Indian Health Service accompanied Satcher as "technical experts from the HHS agencies." Ruffin noted that Acting NIH Director Ruth Kirchstein has not indicated in their conversations opposition to the elevation of the Office to Center status. Bilirakis indicated, however, that he would like to hear "these things" from the NIH Director.

"We particularly appreciate the acknowledgment of the importance of research into the behavioral and social factors underlying health disparities, and support programs which increase educational attainment and employment opportunities," stressed Satcher in his testimony. He noted that the legislation "addresses several key

elements that the Department has identified as essential to a comprehensive approach toward eliminating disparities," including:

- * development of a balanced and comprehensive research agenda that addresses the unequal burden of morbidity and mortality in racial and ethnic minorities;
- * supporting efforts to improve the quality and outcomes of health care services and addressing the social determinants of health, including but not limited to, access to health care;
- * strengthening the data collection infrastructure of HHS;
- * support for graduate health care education curriculum development, continuing medical education efforts to reduce disparity in health and health outcomes, and increasing the knowledge base with respect to cultural competency; and
- * recognition of the important role of the Office of Civil Rights.

Several members of Congress testified in support of the legislation and urged the Subcommittee to mark up the bill next week. Aside from the bill's sponsors, Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL), Ciro D. Rodriguez (D-TX), J.D. Hayworth (R-AZ), Dale Kildee (D-MI), Robert Underwood, (D-GUAM), and J. C. Watts (R-OK) voiced support for the bill. Representative John Dingell (D-MI) issued a statement in support of the legislation and urged the Subcommittee to "move forward" with the bill.

Earlier in the 106th Congress, Jackson introduced health disparities legislation (H.R. 2391) following the release of the Institute of Medicine Report: *Unequal Burden of Cancer: An Assessment of NIH Research and Programs for Ethnic Minorities and Medically Underserved*. The report stated that "NIH should expand its effort to understand why poor Americans and some ethnic minorities are more likely to develop and die from certain types of cancer." H.R. 2391 has been incorporated in Lewis' and Thompson's H.R. 3250. Jackson is seen by many as filling the void left by former Congressman and Labor-HHS Subcommittee member Louis Stokes (D-OH) who was instrumental in establishing the current Office for Research on Minority Health at NIH. Stokes now serves in an advisory capacity to Acting NIH Director Ruth Kirchstein in the creation of a NIH-wide strategic plan on health disparities.

At the hearing, Jackson noted his disappointment that the "health status gap among blacks and other underserved populations is getting worse, not better" despite "national economic prosperity, and double digit growth" for the NIH. He said that he became convinced of the need to elevate the ORMH to "Center" status "after asking scores of questions to the NIH Director and the Directors of the Institutes and Centers during last year's hearings about these disparities." Currently "the [ORMH] director can't spend his own budget unless an Institute director allows him to fund a grant through his or her Institute," he emphasized.

A Change of Heart

When he was NIH Director, Harold Varmus found the creation of a Center/Institute "problematic" and stressed that the NIH has a vast set of initiatives that address health disparities. At the hearing, however, Bilirakis said he had received a letter from the former director suggesting that Varmus now supported the development of the center. As NIH director, Varmus indicated that he understood the motivation behind the legislation, but felt that the targeted population would be poorly served with the Center's creation. Varmus believed then that a new Center could not "possibly have the kinds of expertise currently available across all of the NIH."

The Senate's Companion Bill

In October 1999, Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), and Paul Wellstone (D-MN) introduced S.1880. This legislation, called the Health Care Fairness Act of 1999, is similar to Jackson's, though more comprehensive with regard to the Federal government's role. Title III of the bill strengthens the federal commitment to the "social science aspects of health disparities." It directs the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to conduct and support research on barriers to care, poor quality health services, and the lack of useful outcome measures. The bill also directs the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a study on the data collection and reporting systems within the Department of Health and Human Services. Senator Bill Frist (R-TN) chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on

Public Health has indicated that he will hold hearings on S. 1880.

Kennedy's bill, like H.R. 3250, would establish a "Center for Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities." The Center Director would be appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and report to the NIH Director. A significant difference between the two measures is that in S.1880, the Center would provide funds to NIH Institutes for "high priority areas of minority health research not adequately addressed by the Institutes and Centers."

APPROPRIATIONS STORY (from page 1)

reporting the FY 2001 numbers for the individual Institutes the House subcommittee assumed that when the process is over, NIH will get its \$20.5 billion and NIH's goal to double its budget in five years will have its third down payment.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** received \$3.29 billion from the House committee and \$3.205 billion from the Senate for FY 2001, up from \$2.964 billion in FY 2000 and slightly larger than the President's request of \$3.134 billion. The **Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ)** received a boost from last year's \$198.8 million from the House committee to \$223.6 million, but not quite the President's request of \$249.9 million. The Senate was much more generous in providing \$269.9 million. **Policy Research at HHS**, supported by the **Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE)**, received \$16.7 million from the House and Senate committees, same as last year and same as the President's request. In addition, another \$20.6 million is provided to policy research through the Public Health Service's one percent evaluation set-aside.

The House and Senate committees level-funded **Education Research, Statistics, and Assessments** programs at their FY 2000 levels, rejecting the President's request for a \$49.5 million enhancement. The **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)** did not acquire the \$84 million requested, but received the \$68 million approved in the FY 2000 funding bill. The House also rejected the

administration's proposal to create a new National Institute for Education Research (NIER).

The House did, however, provide increases for **International Education** programs. Domestic programs go up \$5 million and the Fulbright-Hays Overseas program gets a \$3.3 million bump over last year. The Senate committee agreed to the boost for the Overseas program, but kept Domestic programs at last year's level of \$62 million. For graduate education programs, the **Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN)** program is level-funded at \$31 million by the House and received a \$2 million increase from the Senate committee. The **Javits Fellowship** program gets \$10 million from the House, same as the program level for FY 2000 and FY 2001, and \$11 million from the Senate committee. Last year, the Congress provided \$20 million for Javits to forward fund the program, so that the fellowships could be awarded in a timely manner.

The House committee, as it has done in the past, did not load up the **Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)** with directed spending and thus, the agency saw its budget reduced from last year's \$74.2 million to \$31.2 million, same as the President's request. The Senate provided \$56.2 million, including funding for many projects the appropriators deemed worthy.

The **Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)** received a slight increase to \$440 million from the House and to \$446.6 from the Senate, up from \$433.9 million in FY 2000, but below the requested \$453.6 million.

Agriculture Spending

The **National Research Initiative Competitive Grants** program received \$119.3 million in FY 2000. The President requested \$150 million for FY 2001. The Senate Appropriations Committee provided a slight increase over last year to \$121.4 million, the House committee reduced funding to \$96.9 million. For the House the trade-off was to increase Special Grants to \$74.4 million, while the Senate provided \$62.3 million. **Hatch Act** formula funds remained level-funded at \$180.5 million by both the House and Senate.

The **Economic Research Service (ERS)** received slight increases from both the House and

Senate over FY 2000 appropriations of \$65.4 million. The House committee allocated \$66.4 million, the Senate a little more than \$67 million. For the **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)**, the House committee appropriated \$100.9 million, the Senate \$100.6 million, again slightly up from FY 2000's appropriation of \$99.3 million.

The House once again prohibited spending for the Fund for Rural America and the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems. The Senate allowed spending for these programs from already appropriated mandatory funds.

The Senate leadership attached some provisions of the FY 2000 Supplemental Appropriations bill to the agriculture bill. It includes language removing the restrictions on FY 2000 spending for the NIH and the CDC. There is also a provision providing \$1 million to the National Science Foundation's Education and Human Resources Directorate to initiate a new cyber-security program called "Scholarships for Service." These funds would be given to undergraduate students for the upcoming Fall semester to develop the skills needed to provide high-quality security for the Federal Government's information infrastructure.

NIH STRATEGIC PLANS AVAILABLE FOR COMMENTS

Several National Institutes of Health (NIH) Institutes and Centers have posted their individual strategic plans on-line. The plans can be viewed at the following web addresses:

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):
www.nida.nih.gov/StrategicPlan/HealthStratPlan.html

National Institute on Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK):
www.niddk.nih.gov/federal/strategicplan.htm

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):
www.nimh.nih.gov/strategic/strategicdisparity.cfm

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI):
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/fromdir/plandisp.htm

SBE ANNOUNCES NEW INFRASTRUCTURE COMPETITION

The National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate has announced its new infrastructure competition for FY 2000 funds. The competition will support the creation or extension of innovative large-scale infrastructure projects that promise widely spread support to social and behavioral scientists. This is the second of two competitions. An earlier SBE infrastructure competition, held in FY1999, resulted in the funding of six new infrastructure projects in the SBE sciences. **The deadline for submission of proposals for the new competition is August 4, 2000.**

Proposed projects may fall entirely within one of the following four areas or a combination of them:

1. Collect data from surveys, experiments, or administrative records; case or historical records; or objects of investigation (archaeological items, for example); that will support broad-based investigations into the most important scientific questions facing social and behavioral science in the next decade.
2. Create Web-based data archiving systems that enable world-wide access to linked databases, and that incorporate innovative capabilities for metadata, file searching, and data confidentiality protection.
3. Create Web-based collaboratories to enable real-time controlled experimentation, to share the use of expensive experimental equipment, and/or to share widely the process and results of research in progress.
4. Establish Centers in research areas where concentrated, sustained, and coordinated effort by multiple researchers is required to (1) develop a fledgling field; (2) reinvigorate a stagnant field; or (3) jump-start an area that is ripe for major breakthroughs. Investigators need to identify the potential benefits of such activity to the larger community of scholars. Centers may be organized either geographically and/or virtually.

Proposals may be to establish complete infrastructure projects or to prototype particularly

new and risky ideas. Proposals should include specific suggested criteria for evaluation of the project at both intermediate and final stages of the grant.

The Directorate expects to make 4 to 8 awards with a total of \$3 million available for the competition. For the full solicitation go to www.nsf.gov/pubs/2000/nsf0079/nsf0079.htm. For more information contact Paul Chapin 703/306-1760 or pchapin@nsf.gov

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency or sponsoring organization for further information or application materials.

Association of Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) NSAF Small Research Grants Program Deadline: Postmarked by June 9, 2000

APPAM seeks proposals for small grants (as many as 5 grants up to \$20,000 each) to support research for the 2000-2001 academic year. Funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the grants will be made to encourage the use of the National Survey of America's Families (NSAF). An initiative of the Urban Institute, the NSAF is a data resource for research on issues related to poverty, welfare, health care, economic development, and social and family policy.

Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee to be appointed through Joint Center for Poverty Research (JCPR) of Northwestern University and the University of Chicago. For more information about grant and application procedures contact the APPAM web site at: www.appam.org or call 202/261-5788. Further information about the NSAF can be found on-line at: <http://newfederalism.urban.org/nsaf>.

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