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CONGRESS RETURNS: SPENDING BILLS AND IRAQ ON AGENDA

Members of Congress, along with President Bush, returned to Washington in early September to tackle key issues remaining on the legislative and executive agendas. Following the largest electricity failure in the nation's history, legislators are trying to complete a comprehensive energy bill quickly. However, this and the attempt to provide prescription drug relief for seniors and reform Medicare are bogged down in House-Senate conference committees. Thus, Congress' attention remains focused on finishing the FY 2004 appropriations process and dealing with the mounting needs to complete the transformation of Iraq.

When Congress went away in early August, the House had passed 11 of the 13 spending bills for FY 2004, which begins on October 1, 2003. The Senate had fallen behind and only four of the bills had made it through. Since returning, the Senate has debated the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education bill on the floor, beating back amendments to boost spending. That debate will continue during the week of September 8th with more attempts to increase appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and education programs as well as an important political vote on the Administration's attempt to change how businesses treat overtime. It is still unclear whether an amendment will be offered similar to the Toomey amendment in the House (see *Update*, July 14, 2003) to challenge the NIH peer review process.

(Continued on Next Page)

Inside UPDATE...

- **NSF RECEIVES SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 5 PERCENT BOOST FROM SENATE PANEL**
- **APPROPRIATORS IN SENATE SHORTCHANGE NIJ, BJS, CENSUS, AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMS**
- **COSSA SEMINAR HELD ON EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE**
- **HHS HOLDS ASPE RESEARCH CONFERENCE**
- **NIH OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH SEEKS NEW DIRECTOR**
- **SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT**

OMB PROPOSES GOVERNMENT-WIDE REGULATORY PEER REVIEW GUIDELINES

On August 31, the Bush Administration proposed a standardized process by which all significant science-based regulations would be subjected to peer review. The draft guidelines, issued by the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), will now go through a process of public comment and interagency review. OMB hopes to institute a final process in February 2004.

In announcing the proposal, OMB explained that "Although some Federal agencies already practice peer review, there are no minimum, government-wide standards for peer review." To remedy this, the Administration would require all regulatory agencies to

(Continued on Next Page)



CONGRESS RETURNS, (Continued from Page 1)

With the President now requesting \$87 billion to finish the job in Iraq and the budget deficit climbing close to half a trillion dollars, the appropriators are wary of pushing the spending envelope too far. This is evident in the decisions of the Senate appropriations committee as it marked up the VA, HUD, Independent Agencies and Commerce, Justice, State (CJS) bills on September 4th. (See details in this issue).

It is clear that, as it has so often in recent years, the appropriations process will carry on after the start of the fiscal year. The use of Continuing Resolutions (CRs) will occur to give Congress and the Administration some breathing room and once again will keep Congress in session past the leadership's hoped-for adjournment date of October 3.

OMB PEER REVIEW, (Continued from Page 1)

convene a panel of outside experts to review the scientific basis of any regulation costing the private sector more than \$100 million a year. Peer review could also be initiated if a regulatory action could have "a clear and substantial impact on important public policies" or if the Administrator of OIRA determines a regulation is of "significant interagency interest or relevant to an Administration policy priority."

John Graham, the Administrator of OIRA and on leave as Professor of Policy and Decision Sciences at the Harvard School of Public Health, noted "A more uniform peer review policy promises to make regulatory science more competent and credible." Critics, however, have cautioned that, if implemented, this policy will be a tool for the corporate sector to use against potentially costly Federal policies.

Clearly the guidelines would delay the implementation of regulations by adding this additional step. The uncertainty lies in what impact the peer review process will have. The proposal calls for reviewers who "possess the requisite experience and independence from the agency." The selection process, however, could fall victim to political considerations.

Public comments on the draft guidelines may be submitted through October 28. For full text of the proposal, please go to <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/pubpress/2003-34.pdf>.

SCIENCE FOUNDATION RECEIVES SLIGHTLY MORE THAN 5 PERCENT BOOST FROM SENATE PANEL

The Senate Appropriations Committee marked up its version of the FY 2004 VA, HUD, Independent Agencies spending bill on September 4th. Senator Christopher 'Kit' Bond (R-MO), Chairman of the subcommittee responsible for this bill, remarked that although he and Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) still supported the idea of doubling the National Science Foundation's budget, circumstances made it difficult to follow through on the promise of that increase enacted in the NSF Reauthorization Act last year.

Thus, the panel recommended a FY 2004 NSF budget of \$5.585 billion, \$275.8 million or 5.2 percent over the FY 2003 appropriation and \$104 million over the Administration's request, but \$54 million below the level allocated by the House.

The Committee funded the Research and Related Activities (R&RA) account at \$4.22 billion, a \$164.2 million or 4 percent boost from last year. The comparable House figure was \$4.306 billion. The Administration had asked for \$4.106 billion. Within R&RA, the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate was funded at \$206.7 million, \$12.4 million over last year, but \$5 million less than both the House and the Administration provided. Percentage-wise, SBE received the largest increase (6.4 percent) of any of the research directorates. The Committee report makes no mention of the Human and Social Dynamics priority, but acknowledges the Science, Resources, and Statistics Division's need for funds to conduct the National Survey of College Graduates. The Committee also notes its interest in SBE's activities "to raise scientific literacy."

The panel funded the Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate at \$975.9 million, a \$72.7 million or 8 percent increase over FY 2003. The House provided \$904.7 million and the Administration requested \$938 million. The Committee, as the House did, provided enough funds to increase stipends in all NSF graduate fellowship programs to \$30,000. Within EHR, the Committee boosted funding for programs directed to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Tech Talent undergraduate support program, the Advanced Technology Education program, and Informal Science Education. As usual, the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCOR) was rewarded with increases by

the Senate, up \$10.6 million from last year. The Math and Science Partnership program received \$145 million, an increase of \$18.3 million above last year's enacted level, but still significantly below the Administration's request of \$200 million.

SENATE APPROPRIATORS CREATE FUNDING DIFFICULTIES FOR NIJ, BJS, CENSUS, AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The Senate Appropriations Committee has made life difficult for a number of agencies that support research and statistics in the Commerce, Justice, State FY 2004 spending bill. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Census Bureau, and the State Department's Educational and Cultural Affairs exchange programs were denied requested increases by the panel. The exception was the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The Committee provided \$50 million for NIJ's base funding. This is \$6.3 million below the Administration's request, \$9 million below the House figure, and \$9.9 million below last year's appropriation. In addition, the Committee report indicates that the \$50 million should be parceled out in the following manner: \$20 million for NIJ's Office of Science and Technology; \$21 million for the seven National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Centers; \$4.5 million to the National Crime Prevention Council for the McGruff program; \$2 million for the Ohio Palmprint program; \$1.5 million for the National Judicial College; \$850,000 for the Mistral Security Non-Toxic Drug Detention and Identification Aerosol Technology; \$800,000 for the Haymarket Center's Rehabilitative Confinement Program; and \$200,000 for Merit School of Music's alternative to crime and violence program in Chicago, IL. Since this adds up to more than \$50 million, it appears there are no funds left for anything else, such as social and behavioral science research. In addition, the Senate, unlike the House, did not fund the proposed \$177 million DNA initiative to improve state and local DNA laboratory capacity, \$10 million of which was designated for research, demonstration, evaluation, statistics, and training.

The **Bureau of Justice Statistics** funding for FY 2004 as recommended by the Senate panel is \$25 million. This is \$8.7 million below the House, \$10.8 million below the request, and \$7.1 million below last year.

The Committee provided the **Census Bureau** with \$550.9 million for FY 2004, the same amount as last year. Of this total, \$181.8 is for Salaries and Expenses to conduct its regular surveys, and \$369.1 million is for Periodic Censuses and Programs, which includes planning for the 2010 Census. The comparable House figures are \$662 million overall; \$220.9 for Salaries and Expenses and; \$441.1 million for Periodic Censuses and Programs.

The good news story is that the Senate panel increased funding for the Economic and Statistics Administration, which includes the **Bureau of Economic Analysis**. Noting that "relevant, accurate, and timely economic measures are more important than ever before," the Committee provided the \$84.8 million requested by the Administration, over \$13 million more than FY 2003 and \$9.8 million more than the House.

Finally, the CJS bill includes the **State Department's Educational and Cultural Affairs** exchange programs. Here, the Senate panel rejected the Administration's request to move funding for all exchange programs into this account and thus only allocated \$255.3 million, an \$11.6 million boost over FY 2003 programs, but \$90 million below the House, which accepted the Administration's transfer.

Both the VA, HUD and CJS bills will now go to the Senate floor. The CJS bill is more problematical since it still includes a provision overturning the FCC decision to ease media ownership rules, thus provoking a veto threat from the President.

COSSA SEMINAR HELD ON EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

With Congress, the States, and localities still working through the changes caused by the 2001 "No Child Left Behind" education act, COSSA focused its second seminar of 2003 on the effect of various dynamics on student achievement. The July 17 briefing, which was co-sponsored by the American Psychological Association, was entitled "Enhancing Educational Performance: Social, Motivational, and Cultural Factors."

Impacts on Young Children

Rebecca Marcon, Professor of Psychology at the University of North Florida, focused her presentation on "Differential Factors Affecting Young Children's Educational Performance." She explained that most of the research she was discussing was done in Washington, D.C. to analyze why children in the city weren't doing

better in school despite a heavy investment in pre-kindergarten programs. She noted that goals at the outset of conducting the research included analyzing the preschool programs and curriculum, considering parental involvement, and identifying specific risk factors.

To answer these questions, Marcon explained that she had to consider a number of different approaches to child development, such as: How do children learn – by direct instruction or by exploring their environment? How much autonomy should be given to young children – very little, some, or a lot? Who should initiate learning – the teacher, parent, or child? After listing these methodologies, Marcon noted, “There is a lot of research support for all of the different approaches that we have in preparing young children for school and to succeed.”

To conduct the study, Marcon looked at children in a number of different Washington, D.C. schools with the same base curriculum. She explained, however, “I saw everything across the board being done; very different things in the way that the teachers interpreted the curriculum and what they were doing with young children.” From these observations, Marcon compiled three models for methods of teaching preschool: child-initiated, academically directed, and a combination approach.

In the child-initiated model, the student selects the topics and activities he or she would like to pursue. The teacher serves to guide, facilitate, and build on the child’s interest. Marcon noted that these classrooms tend to be fairly happy places – in terms of their social/emotional environment. She also remarked that these classes are not free-for-alls, but that the structure might not be immediately apparent to a new observer.

Academically directed classrooms, by contrast, feature a good deal of large group instruction. You will often find the teacher at the front of the room doing regimented question and answer activities – not a lot of leeway for individual input unless a student is responding with a correct answer. This model doesn’t allow for tailoring to different students’ needs.

To compare the academic achievement of students taught in these different classroom models, Marcon compared grades earned by the children in the third and fourth grades. She explained that the third to fourth grade transition is a key one, as the fourth grade requires students to do more independent thinking than ever before. She noted that “By third grade most of the children, regardless of their preschool model,

perform similarly.” In fourth grade, however, the students who had been taught in the academically directed model had trouble keeping up with the independent activities, and accordingly, their grades dropped. These trends held when Marcon again analyzed report cards at the end of sixth grade.

To explain these tendencies, Marcon discussed the importance of socio-emotional development and the focus on it in the child-initiated classroom. Especially in boys, a focus on socio-emotional development in early learning contributes to higher grades and test scores down the road – both on an overall battery and individual subjects. And she explained that overall student performance among the students she observed was so poor “because only 20 percent of them had attended a preschool or kindergarten that focused on socio-emotional.”

Marcon also talked about parental involvement as a factor in student performance. Her research showed that students whose parents were involved in their education got higher grades at all levels. Head Start programs in Washington were doing a good job of encouraging lower-income parents to get and stay involved, whereas academically focused pre-K programs “didn’t foster parental involvement to the same extent.” She concluded by stressing that a child-initiated learning environment that incorporates socio-emotional development and encourages parental involvement is key to student performance throughout the educational path.

Getting Girls Involved

Patricia O’Reilly, Professor Emerita of Psychology and Educational Studies at the University of Cincinnati, discussed “Including Girls in the Education Mainstream.” This has been a hot topic in Washington this year, as the Bush Administration has discussed both single-sex classroom proposals and changes to the Title IX gender equality educational laws.

O’Reilly opened by explaining that the focus on accountability and testing brought about by the “No Child” legislation has reduced gender equity in classrooms as a priority of educators. She criticized the attacks on Title IX as a law that shortchanges boys’ sports by mandating equal funding levels. O’Reilly also noted that “girls are being pressured to deal with typically teenage issues before they’re teenagers, including fashion, body image, and sexual harassment.”

To begin the discussion of how to educate girls, O’Reilly posited, it’s important “to think about how to

prepare girls to become future workers.” She noted that when eighth grade girls are polled, their top future career choice is teacher, followed closely by nurse, librarian, photographer, and dancer. There is very little interest in technology-related careers. She pointed to some reports that have concluded that the use and application of technology has to be more inviting for girls.

O’Reilly also pointed to a number of other fields that girls must be made more fluent in: analytical skills, community participation, financial literacy and independence, and workplace rights and benefits. To attain this goal, educating female adolescents needs to extend beyond the classroom. Along these lines, O’Reilly mentioned a number of after-school and youth development programs that have received funding from the government in recent years.

Within schools, girls should be encouraged to “take the trio of core science courses: physics, biology, and chemistry.” And there should also be a focus on getting girls into top science and math courses on the AP or honors level. O’Reilly encouraged researchers to look into the relationship between girls’ and boys’ test scores. Furthermore, culturally- and ethically-sensitive interventions and programs should be developed for girls from high-risk backgrounds and environments.

Confronting Racial Inequality

Ron Ferguson, an economist and Lecturer of Public Policy at Harvard’s Kennedy School, addressed “What Doesn’t Meet the Eye: Understanding and Addressing Racial Disparities in High-Achieving Suburban Schools.” He explained that he’s been working with a group called the Minority Student Achievement Network, which is a network of 15 suburban school districts convened by the superintendent in Evanston, IL about five years ago. The network is focused on closing the achievement gaps between whites and Asians on the one hand, blacks and Latinos on the other.

To analyze student achievement, Ferguson conducted a survey across the four groups of experiences in school. As background information, he found that blacks and Latinos are more likely to come from single-parent households, have parents with lower educational achievement, and have fewer computers and books in the home. Students across all four groups, however, had similar perspectives about achievement and their desire to do well, whether class work was interesting, and their peer dynamics.

A major problem Ferguson found is that blacks and Latinos report that they have much more difficulty understanding the teacher’s lesson and assigned readings than whites and Asians. He asserted that this shows “there really are skills gaps that we need to take seriously and deal with.” He also noted that blacks, whites, and Latinos report the same amount of time taking for homework, even though there is a difference in homework completion rates. This demonstrates that the blacks and Latinos aren’t getting the same pay off for time they invest, due to lacking skills.

Ferguson, importantly, also found differences between the four groups in how teachers push their students. Blacks, Latinos, and Asians were more likely to report that teachers encouraged rather than demanded from them in their schoolwork. Whites, on the other hand, were equally likely to say that their teachers encouraged and demanded more of them in school. This can indicate that teachers are more likely to believe that whites can achieve at a high level in academics. This kind of assurance should be provided to kids of all backgrounds in school.

To respond to this, the Network has prepared memos on encouragement and demand that it sends to schools on a customized basis using collected data. The data is not racialized to encourage all teachers to use it. But the thinking behind it is that if heeded, the recommendations in the memos will help narrow achievement gaps by pushing all students equally.

COSSA will prepare edited transcripts of the seminar, which included a lively question and answer period. These should be available in October. If you would like to request a copy, please e-mail cosssa@cosssa.org.

HHS HOLDS ASPE RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON WELFARE, POVERTY, AND FAMILIES

From September 4-5, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago’s Joint Center for Poverty Research (JCPR) held its 2002-2003 Health and Human Services (HHS) – Assistant Secretary of Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) Research Development Grants Conference. With opening remarks from Don Oellerich, Deputy to the Chief Economist of ASPE, and Greg Duncan, Director of JCPR, the conference began with research illustrating the informal relationship and perspective limitations between managing work in the retail sector and childcare responsibilities. According to Julia Henly of the University of Chicago, “Lower-level

jobs in the retail sector may pose particular challenges for care giving because of low pay, fluctuating hours, and nonstandard scheduling practices common to the retail industry.” Policymakers, Henly asserted, “need to build a child care system that responds more effectively to working parents’ needs and that would, in particular, allow more seamless transitions across arrangements of different types,” because the ability of low income parents to find and maintain childcare is critical to their success in the labor market.

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act signaled a dramatic shift in the work-related expectations placed on low-income mothers with young children. Rashmita Mistry of the University of California, Los Angeles assessed the relations among maternal employment, family processes, and preschoolers’ cognitive and social adjustments for families and child development. Mistry found, that among low-income families, maternal employment has overall positive effects for children’s cognitive and social development. “It is possible, however, that this result itself may be indicative of additional selection factors; that is, that low-income women who are able to get and maintain a job also have more positive parenting skills, and have children who do better cognitively and socially,” she asserted. However, more recent studies report few differences between children of working and non-working mothers. Although maternal employment does affect children’s cognitive and social development, the research found that parenting behavior was just as significantly related to both cognitive development (positive) and children’s problematic behaviors (negative).

Rounding out the presenters, Laura Pittman of Northern Illinois University, discussed child development in correlation to grandmothers’ involvement among children and adolescents growing up in poverty. Recent policy decisions associated with welfare reform and the foster care system put grandparents in the position of serving as the safety net for their grandchildren when family problems arise. According to Pittman, “there are five types of grandmothers: custodial, co-residing, care giving, non-care giving, and non-present.” Contrary to popular belief, “children who are raised by grandparents appear to fare worse academically compared to those raised in both single- and two-parent households, and are more likely to be held back a grade and less likely to complete high school,” she noted.

Children and adolescents who reside with the custodial grandmother are less academically successful because the grandmother may lack education and,

therefore, will not be able to assist with school related work. In addition, custodial grandmothers tend to focus primarily on the overall well being of the child and as a result, education and instruction are often neglected. “Children growing up in poverty are at increased risk for worse functioning in both cognitive and socioemotional domain,” Pittman stated. Children, especially adolescents, living with their grandmother may not focus on school because of the psychological stress many experience as a result of feeling unwanted by their mother. However, grandmothers do make a positive contribution, according to Pittman, if replacing an absent or poorly functioning mother or supplementing her own personal and material assets.

NIH OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH SEEKS NEW DIRECTOR

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking to fill the position of Director, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) within the Office of the NIH Director. The OBSSR Director also functions as the NIH Associate Director for Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. Ruth Kirschstein, Senior Advisor to the NIH Director and Duane Alexander, Director of National Institute of Child Health and Human Development are co-chairing the Search Committee.

The OBSSR Director serves as a liaison between the NIH intramural and extramural communities and with other Federal agencies, academic and scientific societies, national voluntary health agencies, the biomedical research community, the media, and the general public on matters pertaining to behavioral and social sciences research.

The Office is congressionally mandated to serve as a focal point for the advancement of social and behavioral sciences research across the NIH Institutes and Centers. OBSSR’s guiding philosophy has been that scientific advances in the understanding, treatment, and prevention of disease will be accelerated and enhanced by greater attention to behavioral and social factors and their interaction with biomedical variables.

The announcement for the position can be found at <http://www.jobs.nih.gov/DirOBSSR.pdf>. **The application deadline is October 3, 2003.**

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

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

Developing Centers on Intervention for the Prevention of Suicide

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) are seeking investigator-initiated research applications to establish Developing Research Centers on Interventions for the Prevention of Suicide (DCIPS). The purpose of the initiative is to establish core support for building research infrastructure for the preventive and treatment interventions for suicidality (severe ideation, attempts, deaths) related to mental health, substance use disorders, and alcohol use disorders.

The request-for-applications (RFA-MH-04-003) emphasizes that the prevention and intervention research that is needed to reduce morbidity related to suicidality as well as suicide deaths requires the adoption of novel methodological and organizational approaches, building of new partnerships, and, in general, enlargement of research activities beyond the traditional boundaries of academic settings and specific academic departments.

The goal for the centers is to: 1) build networks to conduct intervention/prevention trials and/or evaluate community practice and service systems, 2) foster interdisciplinary collaboration, 3) develop new research methods, 4) develop, pilot, and test novel treatments for suicidal behavior, with particular emphasis on interventions translated from basic science and/or neuroscience, and 5) cultivate training opportunities for new and established investigators.

A letter of intent is due by October 17, 2003 and applications are due November 18, 2003. For more information contact Jane L. Pearson, NIMH, (301) 443-3598 or jp36u@nih.gov; Lisa Onken, NIDA, (301) 443-2235 or lisa_onken@nih.gov; or Charlene E. LeFauve, NIAAA, (301) 402-9401 or clefauve@niaaa.nih.gov.

Additional information can also be found at <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfafiles/RFA-MH-04-003.html>.

Reducing Stroke Disparities Through Risk Factor Self-Management

The National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) invites applications to support research on reducing disparities in stroke through prevention of first and recurrent strokes among minority populations. The Program Announcement (PAS-03-166) solicits applications for research that will identify effective, culturally-acceptable interventions involving self-management of risk factors for first and recurrent stroke for members of minority populations.

For more information contact Ronnie D. Horner at (301) 496-2581 or rh266m@nih.gov. Information can also be found on the web at: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAS-03-166.html>.

COSSA WELCOMES NEW CONTRIBUTOR

COSSA welcomes the University of South Carolina as our newest contributor. We look forward to working with the University on issues of interest to its social and behavioral scientists.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences.

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