



# COSSA Washington Update

Consortium of Social  
Science Associations

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## CONGRESS RETURNS: TAX AND SPENDING ON AGENDA

After a two-week Spring break, the 108th Congress comes back to work on April 29. Members and staff return with recharged batteries following a hectic early session that saw the completion of the FY 2003 appropriations process, the passage of a supplemental spending bill to pay for a war in Iraq that still has many unanswered post-conflict questions, and the enactment of a FY 2004 budget resolution with the House and Senate disagreeing on the size of a tax cut.

The focus for FY 2004 spending legislation will now turn to that arcane process known as the 302(b) allocations. Since the 14 subcommittees of the House and Senate appropriations panels initially make the spending decisions, each is given a spending limit within the total funding cap in the budget resolution. For FY 2004, discretionary spending has been set at \$784.4 billion; \$400 billion for defense and \$384.4 billion for non-defense. The increase over FY 2003 for non-defense discretionary spending is less than necessary to maintain current services, according to the Congressional Budget Office. For a panel like the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over the Department of Veterans' Affairs, HUD, EPA, NASA, and the National Science Foundation, a large 302(b) allocation is important. These decisions are likely to be made in the next few weeks, after which the 14 subcommittees will go to work marking up their bills.

On the tax side, the two Houses of Congress finished the budget resolution process in disagreement. The House, in chorus with the latest White House pronouncements, has provided for \$550 billion in tax reductions. The Senate, bowing to the individual power of  
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## ACADEMY REPORT LOOKS AT PROTECTING PARTICIPANTS IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Another report has been issued in the ongoing examination of how to protect participants in research. This one, from the National Academies' Committee on National Statistics and the Board on Behavioral, Cognitive and Sensory Sciences, looks at various issues raised by social and behavioral science research with human participants.

The report, *Protecting Participants and Facilitating Social and Behavioral Science Research* ([www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu)) was prepared by the Panel on Institutional Review Boards, Surveys, and Social Science Research, chaired by Cora Marrett, Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Wisconsin System and the former Assistant Director for the National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate. The  
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## CONGRESS RETURNS, (Continued from Page 1)

members to sometimes dictate policy, has allowed for only \$350 billion, as Sens. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and George Voinovich (R-OH) made it clear to the GOP leadership that they would not accept a higher number. All sorts of political machinations are occurring in Republican camps to figure out how to push the number higher. The budget resolution requires the two tax-writing committees, Ways and Means in the House and Finance in the Senate, to report out their plans by May 7.

With the President riding high in the wake of the victory in Iraq, can he translate his political prowess in foreign policy to his domestic agenda of reducing taxes and limiting spending increases? This is a question that will not be answered definitively anytime soon, but some initial signals should arrive in the next few weeks.

## ACADEMY REPORT, (Continued from Page 1)

report reflects many of the issues raised by the Social Sciences Working Group of the now-defunct National Human Research Protection Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Felice Levine and Jeff Cohen (see *Update*, February 11, 2002).

The report's premise is that the system for protecting human subjects in research needs improvement. For research in the SBE sciences, three concerns are noted. The first suggests that review processes too often focus on documenting consent to participate in research to satisfy Federal requirements rather than focusing on the most effective processes for helping individuals reach an informed voluntary decision about participation. The second is that Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) that review research protocols are not paying enough attention to problems regarding the confidentiality of research data. Finally, the report asserts that the review process may delay research or impair the integrity of research designs because minimal-risk research is overly scrutinized.

With regard to Informed Consent, the Committee recommends conducting research on procedures for obtaining and documenting such consent that "will facilitate comprehension of benefits, harms, risk of harm, confidentiality protection, and other key features" of SBE research. It also calls for the Federal Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) to develop detailed guidance for SBE researchers on appropriate consent procedures for different types of populations, on when it is and is not necessary to obtain consent from third parties, on when it is appropriate to waive signed written

consent, and on when it is acceptable to omit elements of informed consent.

The increasing concern over potential breaches of confidentiality arises from: the growing number and variety of administrative records that are readily available on the Internet that can be potentially linked to research data; the need to retain contact information for respondents from an increasing number of longitudinal data sets; data sharing requirements; and security problems with Internet-based data collection technology. The report includes a special chapter by statistician George Duncan of Carnegie Mellon University on *Confidentiality and Data Access for Institutional Review Boards*.

The Committee recommends that researchers must "explicitly describe procedures to protect the confidentiality" of their data when they submit their protocols to IRBs. In addition, Federal funding agencies should support research on techniques for confidentiality protection and OHRP should promulgate best practices.

Citing anecdotal evidence, the committee criticizes IRBs for overstepping in reviewing research with publicly available microdata files, even though such research qualifies for exemption under the existing Federal regulations. It calls on data archives to certify to researchers that certain data sets are sufficiently protected against disclosure to be acceptable for secondary analysis and with this certification such secondary analysis should be exempt from IRB review.

With regard to minimal-risk research the Committee calls on OHRP to define what kinds of SBE research qualify as "research with human participants." OHRP should also provide examples to IRBs of SBE research that are eligible for expedited review or that can be totally exempt from review. It asks SBE researchers to debrief human participants at the end of the research to "learn about types, incidence, and magnitude of harm" encountered in the study.

As with most other statements regarding human research protection, this one also highlights the need to learn more about the operation and effectiveness of IRBs. Finally the report strongly emphasizes that any committee or commission established to provide advice to the Federal government on human research participant protection policy should represent the full spectrum of research disciplines and the range of the social, behavioral, and economic sciences.

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROPOSES MAJOR CHANGE TO ERIC SYSTEM

A recent draft statement of work released by the Department of Education (ED) signals that the Administration intends to revamp the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system. The draft proposal states that the Department “seeks to contract with an organization to operate an online bibliographic and full-text ERIC database of education journal articles and non-journal materials that is highly efficient and easy to use for educators, researchers, and the general public.”

The launch of a single ERIC would be a dramatic shift from the current system of 16 subject-specific clearinghouses and signals a further attempt by the Department to consolidate information dissemination. ED has also come under fire for its efforts to control the information available on its website, with many researchers charging that studies sponsored by previous Administrations are no longer accessible from the website. The American Educational Research Association, in a letter COSSA co-signed, wrote to Secretary Rod Paige about the website issue and hopes to meet with the Department’s Director of Education Technology to discuss the issue in the coming weeks. For its part, the ERIC proposal explains that the consolidation would allow for “greater speed, efficiency, and cost effectiveness.”

Public comments may be submitted on the draft proposal, which is online at <http://www.eps.gov/spg/ED/OCFO/CPO/Reference-Number-ERIC2003/Attachments.html>, until May 9.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AT NSF

At its recent meeting on April 16, the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Advisory Committee for Environmental Research and Education (AC-ERE) spent some time examining “research at the interface of economics and environment.” Three social scientists were there to give input: Cutler Cleveland, Professor of Geography at Boston University; Geoffrey M. Heal, Professor of Public Policy at the Columbia University School of Business; and Charles Colgan, Professor of Public Policy and Management at the Muskie School at the University of Southern Maine.

The committee and its guests were reviewing the advisory committee’s report, *Complex Environmental Systems: Synthesis for Earth, Life, and Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The report provides an implementation strategy to increase NSF funding for environment research and education in the next ten years. An earlier National Science Board report had recommended substantial boosts in that investment. Although there is no directorate for environmental research at NSF, there is a major effort to increase its presence across the Foundation.

In the committee’s report the social sciences are featured in a section labeled: “environmental research frontiers.” Under the rubric *Coupled Human and Natural Systems*, the report asserts that NSF’s research focus should explore the complex web of environmental relationships and feedbacks at diverse temporal and spatial scales to examine: land, resources, and the built environment; human health and the environment; freshwater resources, estuaries, and coastal environments; and environmental services and valuation. NSF has already run a number of competitions and made awards in these categories.

The report also focuses on *People and Technology Research*, which involves how individuals and institutions interact with the environment and how they use resources and respond to change. Among the research areas are decision making and uncertainty and institutions and environmental systems. The Office of Management and Budget has directed NSF to spend its funds to support investigations into decision making and uncertainty.

*Environmental Education*, according to the report, should be used as an integrating concept across all levels of schooling, and teacher education and professional training need enhancement. In addition, there is a need to strengthen infrastructure and technical capacity, including improved data collection, communication, storage and manipulation machines.

In discussing the report, the three speakers provided suggestions to the advisory committee on how to advance the role of the social sciences in environmental research. All stressed the overall importance of the human connection on environmental activities and systems. Cleveland stressed the role of people as “driving forces” on the system that translates energy materials into economic systems that affect the environment for good and bad. Colgan noted that in looking at ecosystems we should not “manage the fish, but manage the fisherman.”

Heal argued that institutional connections matter and that the notion of “natural capital” was a concept that was taking hold in business and environmental discussions.

He also suggested that we should think more about incentives, especially for the private sector, to treat environmental systems better.

Colgan called for examining environmental activities from not just an economic perspective. Political science, sociology, and geography as well as other social sciences have to be included, he said. As always, there was a call for better data through the integration of social science databases with natural science information, including better cyber-infrastructure for the social sciences. Colgan argued that we need improved information on social change, human change, and natural change (which is one goal of NSF's Human and Social Dynamics priority area). As an example, he cited the Census' distortion of the population of summer resort areas, since the population of these places differs considerably from April 1 (the date of the Census) and July 1.

The Committee appeared receptive to these suggestions and will work with NSF's research directorates, especially Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE), to explore implementation of these ideas.

## COSSA HOLDS SEMINAR ON OBESITY

As increasing numbers of studies are published linking obesity to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other serious health conditions, COSSA focused its first congressional briefing of the year on the epidemic. Before a large, standing-room only audience, the March 21 session, entitled *Obesity, What Can be Done Now?: Examining Environment and Lifestyle*, featured discussion of the economic and health affects on Americans of overweight and obesity and best methods of fighting the problem.

### Environmental Causes and Approaches

Barry Popkin, an economist and Professor of Nutrition at the University of North Carolina's School of Public Health, focused his presentation on the environmental trends that have fostered the growing obesity epidemic in America and changes that can promote better health. He explained that "we've had an enormous increase in overweight and obesity in the U.S. population" in the last 15 years. Popkin further noted that obesity rates have increased rapidly for children and adolescents in the last decade.

This disease has impacted all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and education-level groups but it has affected blacks, Hispanics, and lower-income and lower-education brackets disproportionately. It is also causing great alarm because health problems, such as diabetes, that typically affected people in their 60s and 70s are now affecting individuals in their teens and 20s with regularity.

To explain this trend, Popkin listed the problems related to diet: we eat more often, we are eating bigger portions, and we are eating out more. As a result, caloric intake has increased in the last decade. Compounding the problem is that portion sizes have particularly increased among unhealthy items: soft drinks, fruit drinks, and fast food products. Snacking has also increased rapidly in recent years; as a consequence Popkin asserted that "the average child is eating an extra half a meal a day . . . and that's the same for young adults and adults in the 20 to 40 (age) group."

Diet, however, is only part of the problem. Physical activity levels have also declined greatly in the last few decades. Popkin noted that technological advances, including e-mail and remote controls, have decreased activity greatly, saying, "So we have really worked very hard to create a society that's sedentary, and one of the products of that is this energy imbalance between what we eat and what we do." Perhaps most troubling is the high inactivity level among kids and adolescents. As school budgets have been diminished, physical education classes and instruction have been seriously cut back in many schools and eliminated in others.

So what can we do to reverse these trends and limit obesity? Popkin discussed several environmental approaches to the problem. First, the public infrastructure (sidewalks, streets, building designs...) could be designed or revamped to encourage physical activity. Second, the number of vending machines, especially in schools, can be cut back. Third, food price structures and government subsidies can be revised to make healthy foods cheaper and unhealthy products more expensive. Taxation could also be used to discourage certain food and drink purchases. Finally, TV advertising could be monitored to discourage ads for high-fat foods at certain times (such as during Saturday-morning cartoons).

### Preventing Childhood Obesity in Underrepresented Communities

Sally Davis, Department of Pediatrics at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center,

discussed her work on interventions designed to prevent obesity in children and adolescents in underrepresented communities in New Mexico. She noted at the outset that in the last 30 year years, "I have seen lifestyle diseases, such as obesity and diabetes, increase at alarming rates and in younger ages than ever before." Davis attributed this to the same diet and physical activity problems that Popkin listed in his presentation.

The Checkerboard Cardiovascular Curriculum was the first intervention project she discussed. Funded by a National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) grant, the project "was a culturally and developmentally appropriate classroom intervention that focused on eating a healthful and balanced diet and being physically active." Traditional stories, for example, were used on Navajo reservations to encourage the consumption of native vegetables. Tribal elders, in their role as grandparents, were also involved to encourage the children to be more physically active.

Pathways, a program that was designed by university researchers, Indian nation leaders, and NHLBI officials, is Davis's most recent intervention approach. As she explained, "the four components of Pathways include classroom curriculum, family activities, physical activities, and school food service." The program includes opportunities for children of different tribes to correspond to share ideas and information, school food service workers to learn how to make healthier meals, and teachers to bring physical activity games to their classroom. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has funded the program so that it can be disseminated more widely.

Davis also discussed her efforts to evaluate food supplies available on reservations. By conducting an inventory of trading posts and convenience stores, recommendations can be made to families and store managers about which foods to purchase and stock. She concluded her presentation by noting that confronting obesity is especially difficult in underrepresented communities. A lack of resources limits the food supply and its diversity and also limits opportunities for physical activity.

### **The Treatment of Obesity**

Tom Wadden, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, addressed the treatment and prevention of obesity. He opened with a discussion of weight reduction therapy, noting that

in the past decade, the goals of this intervention have shifted from reducing a patient to an "ideal weight" to focusing on losing 10 percent of body weight. Wadden explained that this is because "the best therapies today . . . generally produce a weight loss of about 8-10 percent of body weight." This reduction is "associated with marked improvements in health complications."

Wadden also discussed pharmacotherapy and gastric surgery treatments for obesity before turning to the social factors that affect obese and overweight individuals. He noted that obese individuals achieve lower levels of education, earn less, and are less likely to get married than their peers with a comparable IQ. He explained that this may be due in part to the social stigmas that affect obesity treatment. Obesity is considered by many to be the result of a lack of individual discipline rather than a disease and/or genetic predisposition.

Wadden continued by asserting that prevention efforts will only be successful if obese individuals can be discouraged from turning to risky over-the-counter products such as ephedra. In addition, primary care physicians need to be better equipped to treat obesity. Doctors should be better educated about the disease and interventions, but this is hindered by a lack of time and typical medical school curricula. Wadden stressed that "we really need to do some demonstration projects to see if primary care physicians can learn to assess and potentially treat obesity, and if not, can they at least . . . send patients to other providers within the health system?" In closing, he noted that more money needs to go to prevention efforts.

COSSA will prepare edited transcripts of the seminar, which included a question and answer period. These should be available by June. If you would like a copy, please e-mail [cosssa@cosssa.org](mailto:cosssa@cosssa.org).

## **FBPCS HOLDS BRIEFING ON THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE**

On April 10, The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences (FBPCS) and the Association for Behavior Analysis sponsored a congressional briefing entitled "Using Science as a Basis for Behavior Change." The briefing discussed how basic science could offer meaningful suggestions to some common, but difficult, problems that Americans face. Michael Perone, Chair of Psychology at West Virginia University, discussed behavior analysis and translational research. According to Perone, "translational research is

work that addresses how knowledge of basic behavior processes informs diagnosis, prevention, treatment, and delivery of services for mental illness. Behavior analysis is the philosophical effort to understand the nature of behavior, limits of scientific knowledge, and social implications of behavioral science.”

Although conducting his research on animal and human subjects, Perone found that “disruptions in behavior may be traced to abrupt shifts in the desirability of environmental conditions.” Kathryn Saunders, a Senior Scientist at the University of Kansas, discussed how to best teach mentally challenged people basic skills like reading. Saunders concurred with Perone, noting, “basic research with humans and animals has elucidated basic behavioral processes that compose beginning word” recognition. Through the use of computerized instruction, Saunders found that there is a strong correlation between reading achievement and phonological awareness.

Rounding out the presenters, Edmund Fantino, Professor of Psychology at the University of California, San Diego, illustrated findings of basic research and how they can aid a person in making logical investments and decisions during confusing times. The seminar concluded with remarks from FBCPS Director Barbara Wanchisen, who stressed how important basic behavioral science is in improving the human condition.

## **COSSA WELCOMES NEW CONTRIBUTOR, AFFILIATE**

The Consortium is delighted that The American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS) has become a Contributor. AAPSS was created in 1889 to promote the progress of the social sciences by creating a forum in which research on contemporary political, economic, and social issues could help inform public policy as well as enlighten the intellectually curious. The Academy publishes *The Annals*, a bimonthly journal that helps fulfill its mission.

COSSA also welcomes the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) as an Affiliate. NASW is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world and works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

## **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.

### **Homeland Security Announces Fellowship Programs: Quick Deadline**

The new Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate has announced two fellowship programs to provide support for graduate students beginning their studies or who have completed one year as well as undergraduates in their junior and senior years. A letter of intent to apply for students seeking support this Fall is due at DHS by April 30, 2003 (dhsed@ora.gov). The completed applications are due on May 19, 2003.

Eligibility for both programs requires that you must be a U.S. citizen attending an accredited college or university in the United States or its territories. For the graduate program you must be pursuing an advanced degree in the physical, biological, social and behavioral sciences including science policy, engineering, mathematics, or computer science. For the undergraduate program you must be majoring in the aforementioned subjects and you must have career and employment goals aligned with the mission and objectives of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. In addition, fellows “must indicate a willingness to accept, after graduation, competitive employment offers from DHS, state and local security offices, DHS-affiliated Federal laboratories, or DHS-related university faculty or research staff positions.”

Each program requires an off-campus research internship at a DHS-designated facility. Stipends for graduate students are \$2,300 per month for 12 months; for undergraduates \$1,000 per month. You cannot accept any other major fellowship or similar award.

For more information, please visit <http://www.ora.gov/dhsed>.

### **Environmental Justice Communication Partnerships**

The National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) are seeking applications for their Environmental Justice:

The purpose of the program is to strengthen the agencies' support of research aimed at achieving environmental/occupational justice for socioeconomically-disadvantaged and medically-underserved populations in the United States. One goal of the participating institutions is to understand the influence of economic and social factors on the health status of individuals exposed to environmental or occupational toxicants. The RFA is also designed to promote health research, education, and intervention programs that address improved ways to serve low income, immigrant, and minority individuals who may be disproportionately exposed to environmental and occupational stressors.

This component of the research program in environmental justice is designed to encourage community outreach, training, research, and education efforts that will become the catalyst for reducing exposure to environmental pollutants in underserved populations. The main objective of this request for application (RFA) is to establish methods for linking members of a community who are directly affected by adverse environmental conditions or community based organizations serving affected communities with researchers and health care providers and to create partnerships that can address environmental health problems. Community based organizations are especially encouraged to apply.

A letter of intent is due September 17, 2003; applications are due October 17, 2003 with an anticipated start date of July 30, 2004. More information regarding the RFA can be found at: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-ES-03-007.html>.

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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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## KEY APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE

As Congress begins consideration of the FY 2004 appropriations process (see related story on the first page), the following members will serve as key players in the National Science Foundation's funding allocation:

### The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies:

Chairman Christopher S. Bond (R-MO)  
Pete V. Domenici (R-NM)  
Conrad Burns (R-MT)  
Richard C. Shelby (R-AL)  
Larry E. Craig (R-ID)  
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Tom Harkin (D-IA)  
Harry Reid (D-NV)  
Tim Johnson (D-SD)

### The House Appropriations Subcommittee on VA, HUD and Independent Agencies:

Chairman James T. Walsh (R-NY)  
Vice Chair Virgil H. Goode, Jr. (R-VA)  
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Association of Research Libraries  
Eastern Sociological Society  
Institute For Operations Research and the  
Management Sciences  
International Communication Association

Justice Research and Statistics Association  
Midwest Political Science Association  
Midwest Sociological Society  
National Association of Schools of Public Affairs  
and Administration  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Council on Family Relations  
North American Regional Science Council  
North Central Sociological Association  
Population Association of America

Social Science History Association  
Society for Research on Adolescence  
Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics  
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion  
Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality  
Sociologists for Women in Society  
Southern Political Science Association  
Southern Sociological Society  
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