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BUDGET SEASON BEGINS: RESOLUTIONS ADVANCE

The role of budget resolutions is to set broad, overall recommendations that reflect the Nation's priorities and to set the stage for the programmatic decisions that will be made by the Appropriations Committees. Both the House and Senate have made progress toward enacting these guidelines.

On March 12, the Senate passed its version of the resolution on a party-line vote of 51-45. The resolution assumes $821 billion in discretionary spending for FY 2005. This breaks the agreed upon cap of $814 billion, but nobody objected when an additional $7 billion was assumed for defense spending. The budget also assumes a 15 percent increase over FY 2004 for homeland security funding. In addition, the Senate voted to increase the assumption for NIH's budget to $30 billion.

The resolution passed by the Senate would, according to the Senate Budget Committee, reduce the deficit from $477 billion in FY 2004, which represents 4.2 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), to approximately $225 billion in FY 2007, which represents 1.7 percent of GDP.

The Budget resolution also provides for expedited consideration of tax cuts that would expire in FY 2005 under current law, including the $1,000-per-child tax credit, marriage penalty relief and the 10-percent tax bracket for the nation's lowest earning workers.

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Inside UPDATE…

LOST IN TRANSLATION: CAPITOL HILL BRIEFED ON THE PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF SEXUAL HEALTH RESEARCH

As some Members of Congress continue to press the National Institutes of Health on its support of sexual health research, the Coalition to Protect Research (CPR), the Decade of Behavior, and 20 other organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), sponsored a congressional briefing, "*Lost in Translation: Public Health Implications of Sexual Health Research*," on March 5th to educate and inform Members of the important public health significance of sexual health research. Three distinguished scientists, John Bancroft, Thomas Coates, and Janet Shibley Hyde, discussed sexual health research across its continuum.

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BUDGET, (Continued from Page 1)

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A week later on March 19, the House resolution emerged from its Budget Committee. It is scheduled for possible floor action the week of March 22. The House resolution assumes a discretionary spending level of $819 billion. Here too, funds were added for defense and homeland security received increases. The Committee froze the non-defense, non-homeland security part of the budget at FY 2004 levels. Within that parameter, however, it assumed increases for key education programs including Title I, Pell Grants, and Special Education. The Committee report also included language noting that: "just as Congress has recognized the importance of increased support and funding for health sciences research, it is important to invest in the basic science research conducted by … the NSF."

The House resolution also assumes making permanent all provisions of the Administration's tax cut agenda, not just those expiring in FY 2005. In addition, unlike the Senate, which included tax cuts as part of the new pay-as-you-go budget rules, the House excluded them. Republican House moderates may cause some problems for the resolution on the floor because of this omission. The pay-as-you-go rule would require offsets for increased spending or decreased revenues from the numbers that are established in the budget resolutions.

The Republican Congressional leadership hopes they can complete a House-Senate conference to reconcile differences in the resolutions before Congress leaves for a two-week Easter-Passover break on April 2.

Appropriations Hearings Commence

As noted, the Budget Resolutions set guidelines. The key spending allocation decisions are made by the 13 Appropriations Subcommittees. Each year these panels call agency and program heads before them to hear the defense of the Administration's proposals. Members of the Subcommittees question, prod, excoriate, seek assurances about parochial interests, and sometimes even praise these agency officials.

NSF Faces Tough Sledding

On February 26, the National Science Foundation leadership appeared before the Senate VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Christopher Bond (R-MO), to defend their FY 2005 budget proposal. The hearing was somewhat unique since Acting NSF Director Arden Bement had been on the job only four days. National Science Board Chairman Warren Washington also appeared on behalf of NSF.

Both Bond and Ranking Democrat Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) continued to express their strong support for "a robust budget for NSF." Both stressed the importance of NSF support for basic scientific research to job creation and economic growth. Bond noted that the three percent increase in the budget request for NSF "is disappointing." Mikulski claimed that "It's an OMB (Office of Management and Budget) budget," not one that reflects NSF's and the nation's needs. Bond, bowing to realism, admitted: "However, with major funding shortfalls throughout the VA-HUD account, it is going to be a major and perhaps an impossible challenge to find additional funds for NSF for FY 2005."

The two Senators vigorously opposed the proposed transfer of NSF's share of the Math and Science Partnership program to the Department of Education. Warren Washington also noted the opposition of the National Science Board to the transfer.

As he does every year, Bond praised NSF's plant genome initiative and railed against the "Eurosclerosis" that afflicts that continent and prevents its people from accepting genetically modified food because of their fear of change. Bement took the opportunity to point out that NSF's priority in Human and Social Dynamics will support research on how individuals and societies cope with change.

The hearing also included John Marburger, head of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Bond provided Marburger an opportunity to respond to the accusations of the Union of Concerned Scientists' report: *Scientific Integrity in Policymaking: An Investigation into the Bush Administration's Misuse of Science* (see www.ucsusa.org). Although Marburger told the panel that a full and complete response was still in progress, he claimed the incidents in the document "do not justify the sweeping accusations." He also vigorously declared that "the Administration does not have a policy of manipulating and distorting science."

Agriculture Focuses on Obesity and Consumer Behavior

On March 10, officials from the Research, Education and Economics agencies of the Department of Agriculture appeared before the House Agriculture and Rural Development Appropriations Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-TX). From the hearing's onset the Chairman made it very clear that the panel would not accept the Administration's attempts to eliminate what he called "Congressionally Initiated Research" by zeroing out the Special Grants account.

Bonilla berated Undersecretary Joseph Jen, claiming that earmarks selected by some "nameless bureaucrat at OMB" already existed in the proposed budget. Bonilla also noted that Subcommittee members were particularly upset by the proposed elimination of a research institute in New Mexico named for former panel chairman Joseph Skeen, who died last year. In the face of this attack, Jen defended the Administration's insistence on peer reviewed, competitive grants.

During discussion of the proposed budgets there was considerable focus on enhancing programs to curtail obesity. The Agricultural Research Service budget includes $5 million for research to help develop and evaluate culturally-relevant behavioral strategies to promote healthy diets. There is $7 million in the National Research Initiative budget to "gain a better understanding of the factors influencing obesity and their interaction, including how they vary by gender, race, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic characteristics."

Finally, there is $8.7 million for the Economic Research Service (ERS) to establish a new consumer information system that will include a survey of an individual's knowledge and attitudes about healthy diets and how those factors are associated with the quality of their diet and health status. Rep. Allen Boyd (D-FL) wondered whether the last item was not duplicative. ERS Director Susan Offut suggested the information would be gathered by adding questions to already-existing surveys.

HILL BRIEFING, (Continued from Page 1)

Issues of Critical Health Importance

Alan Leshner, Chief Executive Officer of the AAAS, served as moderator for an audience of nearly 100 individuals which included congressional staff, NIH officials, and representatives of the broader scientific community. Noting that AAAS is "the largest scientific society with about 120,000 individual members and about 270 affiliated societies that in fact represent some 10 million scientists around the world," Leshner explained that the briefing was designed to address "issues of critical public health importance."

But the underlying value of doing this kind of research along with "protecting the integrity of the research process at all costs are, in fact, issues of interest and importance to all of science and technology," Leshner emphasized. There is an "opportunity for the entire scientific community to be speaking in support of" the research addressed by the briefing, he added.

Explaining that the CPR briefing was designed to talk about why studying sex and its consequences are important, Leshner observed that the supporters of the briefing, "view sex from a health perspective" with respect both to personal health and public health. These organizations also "recognize that sex is an inevitable central part of human life and that sexual health is critical to overall health and well-being of both individuals and the public." Leshner also noted that "Sexual health is a major public health issue since it is a major mechanism for the transmission of many devastating diseases facing human kind." He asserted that there is no way that we can get a handle on these public health crises without understanding the mechanisms of their transmission. Leshner concluded his opening remarks by expressing his confidence and that of the broader scientific community "that science has a contribution to make in this important aspect of public health."

Sexuality and Marriage

Hyde, the Helen Thompson Woolley Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, highlighted the *2001 Surgeon General's Call to Action on Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior* released by former Surgeon General David Satcher (see www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/sexualhealth/default.htm) before discussing her own research on sexuality in marriage. The Call to Action explicitly:

- Promotes basic research in human sexual development, sexual health, and reproductive health, as well as social and behavior research on risk and protective factors for sexual health.
- Encourages expanding the research base to cover the entire human life-span – childhood and adolescence, young and mid-adulthood, and the elderly.

- Urges research on and the development, dissemination, and evaluation of educational materials and guidelines for sexuality education covering the full continuum of human sexual development for use by parents, clergy, teachers, and other community leaders.

To begin the presentation of her research on "Sexuality in Marriage," Hyde noted the 1946 World Health Organization definition of health: "Health is not just the absence of disease, but the presence of positive well being."

She observed that "Viagra has been used by roughly 16 million men worldwide since its introduction in 1998." Much of that use is for sexual expression in marriage, she explained. Hyde also noted that today, "50 percent of marriages will end in divorce." According to Hyde, sexual satisfaction correlates positively with marital satisfaction and "sexual dissatisfaction in marriage predicts divorce three years later."

She emphasized that it is important for people to know about normal patterns in their marital relationships. But we cannot get this information until we do the research to collect the data. She cited as an example what happens when there is a lack of data, such as the recent stories in the popular press regarding DINS (dual income no sex) couples. Contrary to what is being reported, the research reveals that there is no significant difference between these and other couples. Hyde expressed her concern that erroneous reports such as these will lead to a "self-fulfilling prophecy" for couples who are experiencing "marital" trouble. This could cause them to not seek out the root of their problems, which may be symptomatic of something else, because they believe what they are experiencing is "normal."

Sex: Unique Link of Behavior and Physiology

Bancroft, the Director of the Kinsey Institute, discussed the "Psycho-biological Factors in Human Sexuality and their Relevance to Research." He began by explaining that sex is a fundamental part of the human condition and there's a need for good science to help us understand normal sexual development.

Bancroft also explained that sex is "associated with enormous sexual problems," problems of public health and private health. These include: sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies, sexual assaults and rape, child sexual abuse, and sexual dysfunctions.

Why is this research so difficult, Bancroft asked? Because sex is unique in the link between behavior and physiological response, he answered. In addition, Bancroft explained that "our behavior is influenced by the physiological state we call "sexual arousal." Problems arise because "people get sexually aroused when they shouldn't or they don't get sexually aroused when they should." It is a state of mind that can lead us to do some things that we regret, he noted.

Accordingly, there are some important research questions that need addressing, Bancroft underscored. These include:

- Why do some people take sexual risks?
- Why do some people develop sexual interests which get them (and others) into trouble? (e.g., sexually assaulting adults or abusing children)
- Why are there problems with sexual response? Why are some people more vulnerable to such problems?
- How can we help people to manage their sexual lives more sensibly?
- How can we reduce the likelihood of unacceptable sexual behavior?
- How can we help with the problems of sexual response?

Bancroft noted that sex research is "mostly asking people questions about their sexual lives." This is done through face-to-face interviews, questionnaires, and computerized methods, he further explained.

Silence Equals Death

Thomas Coates, Professor of Medicine at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, presented "Sexual Behavior Research, Worthwhile? Useful?" He observed that the questions asked of NIH Director Elias Zerhouni regarding the agency's support of sexual behavior and function research are "reasonable questions." Is sex research: A good use of taxpayer monies? Scientifically valid? Ethically appropriate? Review process followed? Is funding, disproportionate to disease burden? If we are being judged by that measure, "we stand up well," Coates asserted.

The burden is easy to demonstrate, Coates noted. Recent data show that there are 18.9 million sexually-transmitted infections annually. Roughly half of those (9.1 million) occur among 15-24 year olds. There are 42 million people with HIV worldwide, 800,000 to 1

million of these in the U.S. The annual cost to the Federal government is approximately $12 -15 billion.

Coates used eight case studies to demonstrate the utility of sexual behavior research. One of the case studies addressed how do we understand continued high risk behavior following a diagnosis of HIV? It is a conundrum that many legislators have had to grapple with, he noted. He cited research that addressed why individuals in sub-Saharan Africa were not getting tested for HIV? Sexual behavior research tells us the principal reasons individuals were not being tested are logistical: inconvenient hours, inconvenient location, and high cost. The solution has to fit the diagnosis and the diagnosis has to be based on data, Coates stressed.

Coates also highlighted prevention programs that have been shown to work, including an often cited example, the Uganda ABC (**A**bstain 'til Marriage, **B**e Faithful, and **C**ondoms) program. He cautioned, however, that at times the prevention messages miss the point. While the ABC intervention has increased the use of condoms and reduced the spread of HIV/ AIDS, it does not address other factors that impact the spread of HIV/AIDS in women. These factors include: rape and forced sex, as well as women being infected by unfaithful partners.

Violence is a risk factor for women getting infected with HIV. Intimate partner violence is endemic in many societies and it is something we haven't addressed, Coates observed.

Addressing abstinence education, Coates noted that we don't know if abstinence education works because we don't have the research. This does not mean that it doesn't work; it means that we don't have the research to support it. It is an example of where we are not spending our money on evidence-based approaches, he emphasized.

Coates concluded his remarks by cautioning that silence about sexuality will equal death because it won't allow us to take care of the people we need to take care of or put in place the programs we need to put in place. Furthermore, he warned, "when scientists are silenced and they can't criticize one another, the science can't get better."

The Coalition to Protect Research consist of 48 scientific and public health organizations representing scientists, physicians, health care providers, patients, and advocates that support federal investment in basic biomedical, behavioral, and social science research in human sexual development, sexual health, HIV/AIDS and sexually-transmitted diseases. The March 5th briefing is one of the ways CPR is attempting to educate policymakers about the consequence of not supporting research in such a critical area. For more information on the Coalition see: www.COSSA.org/CPR/cpr.html.

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY ON TRACK FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of the Census Bureau's ongoing American Community Survey (ACS) will begin in July and will reach about 2.5 percent of U.S. housing units per year, according to Carol Van Horn, the Bureau's Assistant Director for the ACS and Decennial Census. Van Horn gave an update on the ACS at the March 12 quarterly meeting of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS).

She noted that $65 million was appropriated for the ACS in FY 2004, enough money to start full implementation in the final quarter of the Fiscal Year. The Survey will reach every county in the U.S. and a total of about 3 million housing units per year. (For more background on the ACS, see *Update*, May 23, 2003). The Administration has requested $165 million for the ACS for FY 2005, which begins October 1, 2004. $10 million of that amount is slated for start-up costs.

The ACS is being conducted through the mail, with telephone and personal interview follow-ups for non-response. Bureau staff is doing outreach to Congressional district offices and has prepared a booklet for state representatives as a method of informing elected officials about this new method of annual data collection that replaces the Census long form. In addition, the Bureau has been holding events around the country and taking advantage of "free media" to further educate the public. To this point, in ACS trials, there has been a 52 percent average response rate through the mail up to a 96 percent weighted response rate after follow up. In some traditionally hard-to-count areas, however, the mail-back rate has been substantially lower.

A major component of ACS implementation will be usage of the data by both the research community and government agencies. Annual data will be available for communities of at least 65,000 people. "What's perhaps more exciting is the prospect of having annual socio-economic data for small areas based on three- and five-year averages," notes Ed Spar, Executive Director of COPAFS. According to Van Horn, the National Academies is studying the viability and feasibility of ACS

data and the U.S. General Accounting Office is studying Federal usage of the data. ACS staff has been working to inform Federal agencies about how they can use these newly available data sets.

Given the clouded outlook for the FY 2005 budget and appropriations process (see related story), the immediate future of the ACS is unclear. David McMillen, a House Committee on Government Reform Democratic staffer, noted at the meeting that Bureau officials will have to develop contingency plans for the ACS under a possible full-year FY 2005 continuing resolution (CR). Chip Walker, a Republican staffer on the House subcommittee that oversees the Census, asserted that the Bureau is important to the House leadership and that funding will be allocated for "the major programs." Walker also noted the possibility of granting the ACS some sort of funding or spending exemption even if a CR is enacted. A similar tactic was employed several years ago to keep funding on track for the 2000 Census. Uncertainty abounds, but the ACS, at least for the time being, has the full support of the Census Bureau, the Administration, and some key players on Capitol Hill.

CLANCY DEFENDS AHRQ'S MISSION AT HOUSE HEARING

On March 10, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Director Carolyn Clancy appeared before the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations Subcommittee to present testimony regarding AHRQ's FY 2005 budget request. Although there were very few questions raised relating to the budget request (for more detail on the request, see *Update*, March 8, 2004), Subcommittee Chairman Ralph Regula (R-OH) challenged Clancy to quantify AHRQ's value to U.S. taxpayers.

Regula opened a series of question for Clancy by asking how taxpayers benefit from AHRQ's programs and research. Clancy responded: "What I would tell you first and foremost is that we don't consider our job done unless we can make sure the products of our research are actually delivered in a way to improve the care that people get and improve the outcomes of the care."

Initially dissatisfied by this answer, the Chairman followed up by asking how that is done since the average citizen is never going to hear about the products of the Agency's research? Clancy noted, "That's absolutely correct. How it's done is that we work very closely with those that provide care … to try and make sure that our research addresses their most important questions. We also work with them when the research is done to make sure they have disseminated it [the findings] as widely and broadly as possible. The ultimate goal here is to make sure that when health professionals are seeing patients that they have the best information at their fingertips at the point of care."

Regula also asked whether medical schools are making their students aware of AHRQ's findings. Clancy asserted that the Agency works closely with the American Association of Medical Schools and individual medical schools to train students and residents early on about what they can do to assess and improve the quality of care. Clancy did, however, acknowledge that this is something that needs to be accelerated quite a bit.

Regula wrapped up his questions by asking why AHRQ was founded. Clancy noted the establishment of AHRQ in 1989 was "in response to lots of information produced about the variation in the delivery of healthcare services, mostly for Medicare beneficiaries. … One important reason for those variations was that there were a lot of areas of medicine where we didn't have good evidence of clinical conditioning." Clancy also explained, "We're focused on the big common problems affecting health care by trying to figure out whether we know everything we need to know, and if we do, how do we make sure that what we know is actually what happens in practice and if we don't, where do we need better efforts?"

By the end of the hearing, Regula admitted to "seeing some potential here," and told Clancy that he looks forward to seeing a copy of the most recent AHRQ accountability report as soon as it is finalized.

APPOINTMENTS

OSTP Names Brandon New AD for Social/ Behavioral Sciences

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) has named Susan Brandon as the new Assistant Director for Social, Behavioral and Education Sciences. Brandon replaces James Griffin, who returned to the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences after three years in the position.

After 16 years on the faculty of the Behavioral Neurosciences Area in the Department of Psychology at Yale University (1985-2001), Brandon came to Washington to serve as visiting Senior Scientist at the American Psychological Association. She then joined

the National Institute of Mental Health's Behavioral Science Research Branch in 2003 as Chief of the Affect and Biobehavioral Regulation Program.

Brandon's primary area of research is in computational models of learning and memory, and in the development of a quantitative theory of the interaction of cognitive and emotive processing. She received her B.A. in Psychology from City University of New York and her Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Hawaii.

New Leaders at NSF

On February 21, Rita Colwell left the National Science Foundation (NSF) after almost 5 and a half years as Director. A microbiologist, Colwell will become Chairman of Canon U.S. Life Sciences, Inc., a newly created, Washington-based subsidiary of Canon U.S.A., Inc. whose goal is to identify and develop life-science solutions with potential applications in diagnostics and medical instrumentation

The Bush Administration named **Arden Bement**, currently Director of the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST), as Acting NSF Director. He will continue to hold his position at NIST. Bement is an engineer and has served on the National Science Board and NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate's Advisory Board. OSTP is leading a search to find a non-acting director to run NSF.

On March 12, Norman Bradburn left NSF after four years as head of the SBE directorate. Bradburn will remain in the area as a Senior Fellow in the National Opinion Research Center's (NORC) Washington office. Bradburn was President of NORC for many years. He also hopes to help the University of Chicago renew its interest in education research through the development of a Center. Bradburn will be replaced on an acting basis by **Wanda Ward**, who has been SBE's Deputy Director. Ward, trained as a psychologist (Ph.D. Stanford), has been at NSF since 1991. She has contributed to its efforts at increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in science and engineering, including the development and implementation of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring program.

Before Bradburn's departure, he named **Peg (Marguerite) Barratt** Director of the Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences (BCS), one of the two research divisions in SBE. Barratt came to NSF in 2002 from Michigan State University, where she was Director of the Institute for Children, Youth, and Families, Professor of Family and Child Ecology, and Professor of Psychology, to run the Developmental and Learning Sciences program, which also includes the Children's Research Initiative. Barratt replaces Philip Rubin, who left NSF in October 2003. Thomas Baerwald, the Division's Senior Science Advisor, had served as Acting BCS Director since that time.

Correction

In the March 8 issue of *Update* (Vol. 23, Issue 4), the text on the Census Bureau's FY 2005 budget featured two incorrect figures. Funding for 2010 Census programs is proposed at $435 million, of which $165 million is slated for ACS. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

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