
CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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CONFEREES SPLIT DIFFERENCE ON NSF RESEARCH

Meeting in conference on October 7, members of the House and Senate HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees reached an agreement on the FY 1987 funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF). The conferees appropriated \$1.406 billion for Research and Related Activities -- halfway between the \$1.33 billion appropriated by the House and the \$1.479 billion appropriated by the Senate. Although \$73 million below the administration request, the \$1.406 billion represents an 8.7% increase over the FY 1986 post-GRH appropriated level. The Foundation's total budget appropriated for FY 1987 is \$1.623 billion, an 11.3% increase over FY 1986 post-GRH appropriations. Science and Engineering Education received \$99 million, an increase of 56% over FY 1986 (although \$31 million in carry-over funds from FY 1985 make the real increase smaller). Specific funding levels for individual directorates will be decided by NSF.

This may not be the final FY 1987 appropriations level for NSF, since the Continuing Resolution, which includes all the appropriations bills, may include an across-the-board reduction to pay for the anti-drug legislation. In addition, the Omnibus Reconciliation bill, which makes reductions needed to meet the GRH targets, also may include an across-the-board reduction.

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The Consortium represents more than 185,000 American scientists across the full range of the social and behavioral sciences, functioning as a bridge between the research world and the Washington community.

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COSSA ACTS AS CATALYST FOR OMB INVESTIGATION

On October 9 the influential Washington newsletter, Inside the Administration, reported that the "OMB data collection process [is to be the target of an] incisive GAO inquiry." The General Accounting Office (GAO) will investigate the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in particular its Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), to determine if OMB is "improperly and unnecessarily limiting executive branch agencies in collecting, analyzing and disseminating information."

The purpose of the GAO study is to establish the facts. Congress, cognizant of increasing concern among the scientific community and federal research managers, wants answers to broad and difficult questions about how OMB and OIRA operate in handling information collection requests. The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, under which OMB claims the power to review information collection requests, was passed to reduce paperwork and prevent needless or dangerous intrusion by government into the affairs of the public. No deadline has been given for the GAO analysis given the amount of 'spade-work' needed to gather the information.

The request for the GAO investigation came from the House Science and Technology Committee, chaired by Don Fuqua (D-FL). It came at the same time as the release of a study by the Harvard School of Public Health prepared for Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Investigation and Oversight Subcommittee. The study found that six major peer-reviewed contract studies proposed by the Centers for Disease Control "were either significantly delayed, seriously altered in scientific design, or disapproved entirely by OMB..."

A major source of information for the Inside the Administration article was COSSA. The Consortium has quietly but assiduously investigated the OMB information collection problem for more than a year. After receiving numerous, widespread tips from university-based researchers and from moderate- to high-level agency officials that something was wrong with OIRA's basic attitude towards, and procedures regarding, the collecting of information by federal agencies, COSSA decided to collect its own information. In classic Washington style, COSSA assembled a compelling dossier, protecting its sources; persuaded other groups that the issue was one of common concern; and set about convincing various Congressional offices that the matter needed further investigation. Until some means was found for pursuing the matter in an authoritative, objective way, COSSA did not feel it prudent to publicize its efforts: while OMB has little power over COSSA, it has great power over many of the individuals who were experiencing the problem.

The whole issue is complex because it focuses not only on practice but on political philosophy as well. No administration views information as an unalloyed good: some information is more valuable, substantively or politically, than others. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act, government-sponsored information collection was limited to that which is of "practical utility" to federal agencies. Requests for voluntary responses to a myriad of questionnaires should not make information gathering a "burden" on the public. (Legally required information gathering is not an issue in this context.) While all of these values are, abstractly, ones that the research community subscribes to, it becomes a matter of judgment when protection of the public becomes an excuse for cutting off the collection of information for the rational conduct of government.

The problem affects the intramural research staffs of agencies and those extramural researchers who work under contracts and cooperative agreements -- a substantial proportion of the research community. By and large, information collection under grants has not been interfered with, though there are ambiguous instances and various loopholes in the OIRA regulations and in the original legislation. However, the university-based contract research enterprise is obviously impaired when, for example, the Department of Transportation's University Research Program announcement for competitive projects gives explicit warning of the OMB clearance procedure and requires researchers at the proposal stage to submit a complete survey instrument with full justification for each question.

A major part of the problem is the chilling effect the actions of OMB may be having on the agencies. The Congressional request for the investigation notes: "...we think that, in anticipation of OMB's restrictive actions, data gathering efforts may have been suspended or altered within executive agencies." Officially, the moment of truth arrives when agencies submit to OIRA their plans to collect information voluntarily from more than 10 persons or entities (e.g., businesses). However, COSSA has been told that the problem is less that OIRA delays or misuses the clearance procedure (though there is some evidence of that and a general resentment of arrogant and technically incompetent reviewers), but rather that agencies themselves are so demoralized by the process and the climate that they fail to submit reasonable requests.

There is also the problem that information collection clearance on the management side of OMB is not separated from the budget side of OMB. This is said to produce a pattern of agency-to-OMB dry-runs -- i.e., If we were to send OIRA this request, what would happen to it, and how could it possibly affect our next budget? This may be the most difficult charge to validate.

It is important to keep in mind that this problem (to the extent it is confirmed) is not intrinsically a social science problem, but it has a particular relevance there. The typical means of information collection -- surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and the like -- are major tools of social science research. To have them questioned by OMB reviewers, many not trained in their development or use, raises questions about OMB's real purpose. However, the substantive nature of the information collection requests OIRA has blocked ranges across all areas: nutritional labeling of foods, the state of research facilities in universities, the racial composition of those using public housing, the use of federally owned wilderness and recreational lands, the use of emergency medical services on the highways.

Despite the diversity of targets, there is an overarching social science issue that COSSA has been concerned with. OIRA has often asserted that the voluntary collection of information from the public by government (or researchers contracted by government) is inherently burdensome. COSSA disagrees with this assertion both on philosophical and empirical grounds, and believes that the bulk of research conducted on this issue supports its position.

In its efforts to call attention to the information collection problem, COSSA has been both hindered and helped by the existence of increased congressional scrutiny of OMB and OIRA. In recent years OMB has attempted to bring the regulatory process under its direct control. This has led to delays in the issuance of regulations, which in various issue areas has infuriated Congress. OMB has also attempted to move much of the information dissemination function from agencies to the private sector, a position opposed by Members of Congress, some business sectors, research libraries, and professional associations. What links together these issues is the reverse of the 'burden on the public' argument -- namely, the public's right to know. In this complex situation, persuading others that an information-collection problem exists for the research community and for agencies that need to do research has been easier than persuading Congress to focus on that aspect of the larger problem of the aggrandizement of power by OMB.

Congress has attempted to force OMB to give ground in a number of these areas. The House voted to cut off funding for OIRA in FY 1987 -- a move the Senate refused. OIRA has not been authorized for many years, and is operating under appropriated authority. In the 100th Congress next year, Rep. Jack Brooks (D-TX), Chairman of the Government Operations Committee and the author of the Paperwork Reduction Act, would like to bring the reauthorization question before his Committee. COSSA hopes the results of the GAO study will be available in time to affect any reauthorization of OIRA or other congressional actions relevant to OMB's role in the information collection process.

CONGRESS STILL HERE: SOME ISSUES GET RESOLVED -- MAYBE?

Members of the 99th Congress, many yearning to leave Washington for the joys of campaigning back home, continue to crawl toward adjournment. In the past two weeks progress has been made in resolving most of the issues COSSA has followed during the past year. As of this writing, the Continuing Resolution, the Reconciliation Act, Debt Ceiling Limitation raise, and a possible override of a presidential veto of the Superfund reauthorization are the major stumbling blocks to making the 99th history.

Fulbright Fellowships: An amendment sponsored by Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) to restore \$25 million to the appropriations for the United States Information Agency's educational and cultural exchange programs (including Fulbright) was accepted as part of the Senate version of the Continuing Resolution (see Update, September 5, 1986). The Senate appropriation is now \$145 million, the House \$143 million. A compromise is expected that will leave these programs slightly below their FY 1986 funding level, but higher than the Senate appropriations subcommittee level.

Agresto Nomination: On October 2, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee met to vote on the nomination of John Agresto to be the Archivist of the United States (see Update, September 19, 1986). Sen. Thomas Eagleton (D-MO) made clear to Committee Chairman Sen. William Roth (R-DE) that he would not let the nomination come to a vote, by using the various delaying tactics available to Senators. Roth decided that the Committee's other business could not afford a delay for the sake of the Agresto nomination and thus it was not voted upon. At this point, the administration has three choices: it can renominate Agresto next year when two of his major opponents, Eagleton and Sen. Charles Mathias (R-MD) will have left the Senate; it can grant him a recess appointment while Congress is out of session, allowing Agresto to serve until the end of next year if the Senate does not vote on him; or it can let the nomination die with the end of this Congress.

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations: On October 2, conferees from the House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies resolved their differences. Among their actions were: a \$900,000 increase in funding for the National Graduate Fellows program, thus allowing a new class of fellows to be selected in 1987; other graduate programs were level funded at the pre-GRH FY 1986 level; the restoration of the \$11 million the Senate shifted from NIH to the Math-Science Education program in the Department of Education; a funding level of \$63.6 million for education research and statistics, essentially level funding these program for another year since

the apparent \$4 million increase is earmarked for the regional laboratories for a study of rural education programs; international education programs received a \$1 million increase that was earmarked for the Bologna Center of the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies; accepting the Senate's 39% increase rather than the House's 68% increase for Department of Labor research, demonstration, and evaluation programs; \$6.181 billion for NIH, an amount higher than both the House and Senate numbers; \$176.9 million for the National Institute on Aging and \$366.8 million for the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and \$16 million was appropriated to carry out the National Medical Expenditures Survey.

POLITICAL SCIENTIST NAMED TO NATIONAL SCIENCE BOARD

A political scientist, James B. Holderman, has been named by President Reagan to serve a 6-year term on the National Science Board, the policy-making body of the National Science Foundation. Holderman, president of the University of South Carolina since 1977, received the doctorate in political science from Northwestern University. He also served as chairman of the U.S. National Commission on UNESCO.

Also named to the board were James L. Powell, a geologist and president of Franklin and Marshall College; F. Albert Cotton, professor of chemistry and director of the Laboratory for Molecular Structure and Bonding at Texas A&M University; and John C. Hancock, an electrical engineer and executive vice president of United Telecommunications, Inc., of Kansas City. Mary L. Good, president of Engineered Materials Research, Allied-Signal Corporation in Illinois, was reappointed to a second term on the board.

SCIENCE POLICY STUDY DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

The House Science and Technology Committee's Task Force on Science Policy, which has spent the past two years holding hearings examining the future of the federal role in science, has released two documents of interest to social and behavioral scientists. "Research Policies for the Social and Behavioral Sciences" is a background report prepared by the Congressional Research Service. To order, request Science Policy Study Background Report No. 6-Serial U, from the Government Printing Office, Congressional Sales Office, Washington, DC 20402-9315. The price is \$7.

"The Role of the Behavioral and Social Sciences" covers the testimony given during three days of hearings held by the Task Force in September, 1985. To order, request Science Policy Study -- Hearings, Volume 11, No. 104, from the Government Printing Office (same address as above). The price is \$11. For further information about ordering either of these documents, call GPO at 202/275-3030.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information.

Office of Human Development Services
(Coordinated Discretionary Funds Program)

The Office of Human Development Services (OHDS) is divided into four programmatic units: the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families; the Administration on Developmental Disabilities; the Administration on Aging; and the Administration for Native Americans. Since 1981, OHDS has focused its efforts on three goals: (1) increasing family and individual self-sufficiency and independence through social and economic development strategies; (2) targeting federal assistance to those most in need; and (3) improving the effectiveness and efficiency of state, local, and tribally administered human services. One method OHDS has used to target research efforts on very specific administration goals has been to coordinate most competitive funds from the four units into one comprehensive program, the Coordinated Discretionary Funds Program (CDP).

CDP programmatic priority areas for research and evaluation projects in FY 1987 include: (1) development of measures for assessing the performance of state agencies on aging; (2) assessment of the relationship between social services for the elderly provided through Title III of the Older Americans Act and the Social Services Block Grant Program; (3) risk assessment systems utilized by child protective services in the decision making process; (4) abused and neglected children involved in court actions; (5) methods used in interviewing child victims; (6) removal of the perpetrator versus removal of the victim from the home (effects on the victim and the family); (7) the relationship of child maltreatment to children's social and emotional development and school performance; (8) assessing the impact of child abuse and neglect on victims; and (9) effectiveness of child abuse and neglect prevention programs.

Restrictions on Awards: A 5% cost-sharing by grantees is required for all research and evaluation projects. Project periods and budget limitations differ for each priority area.

Deadline: Applications must be received by December 15, 1986.

Contact: OHDS Office of Policy, Planning, and Legislation
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Society for the History of Technology
Society for Research in Child Development
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Speech Communication Association
The Institute of Management Sciences

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