This Week . . .

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SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ALLOCATES: NSF IN BIG TROUBLE

After numerous tries, the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 5 finally allocated to its 13 subcommittees the amounts they will have to work with in marking up the FY 1988 appropriations bills for the agencies. The decisions could have a devastating effect on the National Science Foundation’s FY 1988 budget and the plan to double its funds over the next five years.

The last issue of Update (July 31, 1987) warned of this situation and outlined the proposal by Appropriations Committee chairman Sen. John Stennis (D-MS) to ignore the decisions of the budget resolution and make the allocations according to a plan of his creation. When the decisions were finally made, significant funds were added back at the urging of the Chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Sen. Lawton Chiles (D-FL), for those agencies under its jurisdiction. Over the protests of Sen. Jake Garn (R-UT), its ranking Republican member, the HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee was not granted additional funds. The chairman, Sen. William Proxmire (D-WI), was not very vocal about the cuts foisted upon the subcommittee.

As a result, the Senate HUD-Independent Agencies Subcommittee--responsible for appropriating funds for NSF, HUD, Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, and the Veterans
Administration--will find itself $690 million short of the budget resolution outlay allocations and $770 million short of the outlay total utilized by the House Appropriations Subcommittee when it made its markup decisions. The House Appropriations Committee has already reduced the NSF request by $50 million, and there are indications that further reductions may occur when the bill is brought to the House floor. In addition, since many of the programs of these agencies are entitlements or have their funding mandated by law, they would not be eligible for cutting. Under these limitations one Senate subcommittee staffer suggested the best-case scenario for NSF may be a freeze at FY 1987 levels.

The Senate subcommittee markup is not expected to occur until mid-September. Congress is now on its month-long August recess, returning on September 9. It would be extremely helpful if university scientists of any discipline could try to see or communicate with their Senators at home and remind them of the importance of increasing funding for this key science agency, which funds a significant portion of the university-based research done in this country.

OMB DENIES ELIMINATING CENSUS QUESTIONS

Wendy Gramm, Director of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), denied that her office was proposing to eliminate questions from the 1988 dress rehearsal questionnaire for the 1990 census. Testifying before the Joint Economic Committee (JEC) chaired by Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) on August 7, Gramm asserted that OIRA was simply exercising its survey clearance powers under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1980 by asking the Census Bureau to justify the ‘practical utility’ of some of the items on the questionnaire.

Gramm’s appearance on Capitol Hill followed strong reactions among many groups, COSSA included, to a Census Bureau statement that "On July 24, 1987 the OMB informed the Census Bureau that roughly 30 questions should be dropped from questionnaires submitted for approval to be used in the 1988 Census Dress Rehearsal." About two-thirds of the proposed cuts are in the housing policy area; others include questions about employment, commuting, migration, and fertility. Both OMB and the Census Bureau regard the content coverage of the dress rehearsal as a preview of the questions to be used on the 1990 Census of Population and Housing. Gramm stated that she did not understand why Census was circulating such a memo, since OMB was simply "raising questions" about the questions and "not proposing to eliminate anything."

Sen. Sarbanes noted that for almost three years OMB had chaired the federal agency council which met to develop the content and questions for the 1990 census. Why, with the questionnaire for the dress rehearsal due to be printed in September, was OMB raising objections now? Gramm again cited the
PRA clearance procedure and noted since OMB had not actually seen the wording of the items until June 17, 1987, the normal 60-day clearance procedure (Gramm noted that a full 90 days would be used in this case) began on that date. Gramm defended the clearance procedure as necessary in order to balance the information needs of the government with the burden imposed on the public in providing that information. She claimed the Census imposed 36 million burden hours on the public at a cost of over $450 million. Gramm assumed a value of $15 an hour to complete the forms; when Sen. Sarbanes said he found that figure somewhat high, Gramm replied "OK let's make it $10 an hour."

Another member of the JEC, Rep. James Scheuer (D-NY), accused Gramm of trying to limit knowledge and information. Making a pitch for research by scholars, Scheuer (who has attended COSSA congressional seminars) asked whether every question in the Census needs to be justified by practical utility. Gramm claimed there is enormous misinformation about what OMB is trying to do: "we are not trying to cut back information." Rep. Mervyn Dymally (D-CA), chair of the House Subcommittee on Census and Population, angrily accused OMB of being "irresponsible" in using the PRA to raise concerns about the questions at this late date.

Preceding Gramm was Commissioner of Labor Statistics Janet Norwood, who was making her monthly appearance before the JEC to detail the nation's unemployment picture. Responding to Chairman Sarbanes inquiries, Norwood expressed the dire consequences to programs at the Bureau of Labor Statistics if OMB did eliminate some of the 'questionable' items from the Census. Gramm was followed to the witness stand by representatives of the National Association of Counties, the National League of Cities, the National Association of Homebuilders, the AFL-CIO, and the American Library Association, all of whom argued the necessity of maintaining the questions under discussion.

HOUSE PASSES LABOR, HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION BILL

On August 5 the House of Representatives voted 336-89 to pass the FY 1988 appropriations bill for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and some independent agencies. In general the legislation rejected most of the administration's attempts to eliminate certain programs and to reduce the budgets of others (an exception was the United States Institute of Peace; see related story). The House demonstrated strong support for health research, especially on AIDS, and increased funding for education programs. What follows is a breakdown of the bill by agencies of interest to social and behavioral scientists. Specific comments about an agency are based on the language of the appropriations committee report.
Labor

The Bureau of Labor Statistics received $184.8 million, a slight decrease from the request of $185.2 million, but a 6% increase over FY 1987. With the Consumer Price Index revision project phasing down, the Committee felt a staff reduction could be absorbed. Funds were provided to establish a Survey Design Research Center, in collaboration with the National Center for Health Statistics, to develop and test survey questionnaire designs.

The research and evaluation budget at the Employment and Training Administration received $19.0 million, the amount requested and a 32% increase over FY 1987. This increase, according to the Committee, is "to enhance the Department's ability to examine how Federal resources can best be focused to assist those most in need of employment and training assistance." COSSA testified in favor of increased funding in May.

Health and Human Services (HHS)

The bill includes $945.4 million for all activities related to AIDS, almost doubling the amount appropriated in FY 1987. The funds for AIDS will be in one consolidated account in the Office of the Secretary, but specific amounts were appropriated to the various agencies within HHS. About one-third of the funds ($306.8 million) will go to the Centers for Disease Control. The Committee has been concerned that adequate advice from researchers outside the federal government is not being received and therefore recommends the establishment of advisory committees on AIDS at the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration (ADAMHA). In addition, the Committee believes better overall coordination of the AIDS effort is needed; thus a Secretary's Advisory Board is needed.

The National Institutes of Health received $6.6 billion for research and training plus another $472.4 million for AIDS research bringing the NIH total to $7 billion. This is a 14% increase over FY 1987 appropriations. The administration's attempt to carry over funds from FY 1987 into FY 1988 was rejected in the FY 1987 supplemental appropriations bill. The Committee, as it has done in the past, included report language reiterating "its strong support for increased health and behavior research at NIH" (emphasis added). It also noted "that the potential payoff from increased health and behavior research, in terms of reduced mortality and morbidity and the associated social and economic costs, warrants an intensified effort by NIH to support this type of research." According to NIH, 3% of its budget was spent on health and behavior research in FY 1986. The National Institute on Aging was allocated $203 million for FY 1988, a 30% increase over the request and a 14% increase over FY 1987 appropriations. NIA receives $377,000 for AIDS research. The National Institute on Child Health and Human Development received $405.7 million for FY 1988, an increase of 30% over the

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request and 12% over FY 1987 appropriations. In addition, this Institute will receive $9.9 million of the AIDS allocation. The National Institute on Mental Health received $265.5 million for research in FY 1988, representing a 22% increase over the request and 13% over FY 1987 appropriations. Research funds for the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism were not appropriated because neither agency has been reauthorized yet. ADAMHA received $101.3 million of the AIDS research funds.

The National Center for Health Statistics and the Health Services Research and Technology Assessment appropriations were deferred pending the passage of authorization legislation. This has occurred before. By the time the appropriations process is finished these agencies will have an authorization and will receive their appropriations. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) received $5.1 million, the same as the request and the same as last year. The Committee continues to support the Multi-Regional Policy Impact Simulation Model project, but will not increase ASPE's funding for anything else.

Education

The bill includes $73.8 million for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) (excluding the funds for library programs). This is a $10.2 million increase over FY 1987 and a $3.6 million increase over the FY 1988 request. COSSA testified in support of increased funding for this agency in May. The Center for Statistics received $22.4 million, of which $7.9 million will go for the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Committee also directed the Center to develop a National School Retention/Dropout indicator, which is also part of a new authorization for the Center included in the House version of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (see Update, June 5, 1987). The Office of Research received $21.8 million, an increase of $300,000 over the budget request and an increase of $1.7 million over last year's appropriation. Of this amount $2 million is appropriated for Field Initiated Research, quadrupling the amount available in FY 1987.

Graduate education programs, despite administration requests to abolish them, did remarkably well. New programs authorized by the Higher Education Act Amendments of 1986 received funding for the first time and older programs received considerable increases. The Javits Fellowship Program received $7 billion, which is $2.3 billion above last year. This program awards graduate fellowships in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowships for graduate students demonstrating financial need received an increase of $3.25 billion to $15 billion, while $3 billion was appropriated for the public service fellowships. The Law School Clinical Program, which awards grants to law schools to pay for clinical
experiences for law students, received $5 million, an increase of
$3.5 million over FY 1987. The Legal Training for the
Disadvantaged (CLEO) program received $2 million to help more
persons from disadvantaged backgrounds obtain a legal education.
Two new programs, Graduate Programs for Minorities and Graduate
Assistance in Areas of National Need, received $5 million and $12
million respectively.

International education and foreign language studies
programs of Title VI of the Higher Education Act received $32.1
million, the same as FY 1987. The administration wanted to
eliminate these programs as well. Domestic programs received
$26.55 million and the Fulbright-Hays program for faculty and
doctoral research abroad received $5.55 million.

These numbers are far from final. The Senate needs to pass
its version of this bill and a conference committee needs to
resolve the differences. The likelihood is that a Continuing
Resolution, rather than the regular appropriations bill, will
yield the ultimate funding levels for FY 1988. Yet these House
numbers are a good start.

HOUSE ZERO-FUNDS PEACE INSTITUTE

A last-minute amendment brought by Rep. Robert Walker (R-PA)
calling for zero-funding the United States Institute of Peace
(USIP) was adopted without debate by voice-vote in the waning
seconds of floor action on the House Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.
Rep. Walker’s amendment, which did not refer to the Institute by
name, means that it is up to the Senate to restore USIP funding
and then work out a compromise during the House-Senate
conference. The Institute is seeking $3.31 million for FY 1988,
which the Appropriations Committee had allocated.

The House action was not entirely unsurprising. According
to one staff member, John Norton Moore, chairman of the USIP
Board, had been insulting and uncooperative in testimony before
the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies. At its session, the
full Appropriations Committee had raised questions about the
apparent absence of any system for awarding grants apart from
"cronyism" and the fact that other agencies, such as the Wilson
Center, are engaged in similar efforts. After some debate, the
Committee voted to accept the Subcommittee’s recommendation and
fund the Institute at the administration’s full request--but this
action did not survive on the floor of the House.

Officials at the Institute are optimistic that USIP will
survive. Outgoing President Robert F. Turner asserted that
the action did not reflect a major policy decision by the House,
although he did admit that the move, which he called serious but
not deadly, caught USIP by surprise. Referring to the fact that
the strongest supporters of USIP have always been in the Senate,
Turner said he felt confident that funding will be restored by
that chamber.

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National Institute on Aging

The Behavioral and Social Research Program of the National Institute on Aging is soliciting proposals for projects investigating the interrelationships between health care providers and the aging. Proposed projects should be interdisciplinary, incorporating theoretical concepts and methodologies from the social and behavioral sciences, health services research, and geriatric medicine.

This solicitation is part of a new NIA initiative on aging and formal health care. The need for this type of research, which should stress the social, economic, and cultural contexts within which health care is provided, was identified at a 1985 conference on Aging and Formal Health Care. Programs to fulfill these needs are coordinated by the co-sponsors of the conference, NIA and the National Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology Assessment.

The Behavioral and Social Research Program of NIA was formerly the Behavioral Sciences Research Program. For more information on this program and the reorganization of NIA, see Update, January 23, 1987.

Review Process: Standard peer review panels will be employed.

Budget: Proposals in response to this solicitation will be part of the regular NIH grant competition. The average NIH award is $100,000 in direct costs per year for 3 years.

Deadlines: The regular NIH receipt dates (March 1, July 1, and November 1) are in effect for this solicitation.

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* * * * Note to Readers * * * *

Due to the August Congressional Recess, the next issue of COSSA Washington Update will be published on Friday, September 11th

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