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This Week . . .

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BLOCH AND BOLAND: COMPETING DEMANDS

On March 3, Rep. Edward Boland (D-MA), Chairman of the HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, noted that the budget proposed for the National Science Foundation (NSF) included the largest single increase of any program examined by the Subcommittee. In contrast, many of the other programs under their jurisdiction -- housing, environmental protection, veterans' medical care -- have proposed decreases, creating "a serious problem" for the Subcommittee, according to Boland.

In his testimony before the Subcommittee, NSF Director Erich Bloch defended the proposed 17% increase proposed for the Foundation, stressing the importance of generating new knowledge and the education and training of new scientists and engineers in order for the nation to compete economically. Boland, while reminding everyone of his support for research and science, assured Bloch that the Subcommittee will "balance equitably" the NSF increase with the decreases in other programs. He asked Bloch to submit to the Subcommittee a plan on how the Foundation would react to a $50-$100 million reduction from the requested level. A similar request made last year was ignored, much to Boland's displeasure.

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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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During the course of the two-day hearings, members of the Subcommittee also made clear that NSF's budget for science education ($115 million proposed for FY 1988) was clearly inadequate, particularly in pre-college education. Rep. William Green (R-NY) pointed out that, in the past, scientific research and science education had equal status in the Foundation's establishing legislation, but that has not been the case for a long time. Rep. Lindy Boggs (D-LA) joined in the support for greater efforts in science education by NSF. Boland strongly suggested that extra funds would be added for science education. Given the funding tradeoffs noted above, that increase will probably come at the expense of the research and related activities appropriation.

As part of the examination of the budget proposal each Assistant Director gets a turn to be questioned by the Chairman and other members of the Subcommittee. During the questioning of David Kingsbury, AD of the Biological, Behavioral and Social Science Directorate, Boland noted the protection of the social and behavioral sciences from the reductions made in last year's appropriations bill. Boland asked Kingsbury if he would do that again. Kingsbury said "no," because there was "a need to re-establish the balance within the directorate." (Biology programs, $178 million; behavioral and neural science, $47 million; social science, $32 million.) Boland asked Kingsbury if he would comply should the Subcommittee direct the protection of the social and behavioral sciences from this year's potential reductions. Kingsbury replied in the affirmative. It was unclear whether the question was hypothetical.

BLOCH AND WALGREN: MUTUAL SUPPORT

On March 11, NSF Director Erich Bloch appeared at the authorization hearing held by the House Science, Research, and Technology Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Doug Walgren (D-PA). Bloch, as he had done before the appropriations subcommittee (see separate story), defended the 17% increase for FY 1988 and the proposed doubling of the Foundation's budget within 5 years. The authorizing subcommittee, which establishes spending parameters for the Foundation and its Directorates, generally does not have to deal with competing demands among agencies as does the appropriations subcommittee.

Rep. Walgren focused on the question of "what should we be investing" in basic research at NSF. He asked Bloch what was NSF's initial FY 1988 funding request to OMB. Bloch's response: a 33% increase for FY 1988 and a doubling within 3 years. Walgren seemed to indicate this was something to shoot for in the authorization.

The Chairman was also interested in what NSF would look like with a doubled budget. The Foundation has asked for a 5-year authorization bill, but Subcommittee staff suggest this is unlikely to be approved. Bloch noted that there are planning

groups at the Foundation whose reports would be reviewed at the June meeting of the National Science Board. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) questioned whether NSF had the staff to handle a 100% increase in funds by 1992.

Walgren also asked how the social and behavioral sciences would fare in an expanded NSF. Bloch, noting the 13% increase for the Division of Social and Economic Science proposed for FY 1988, claimed NSF "had done well" by the social and behavioral sciences. He also suggested that new areas of research could be explored.

ACLS PRESIDENT URGES SUPPORT FOR NEH

On March 10, Stanley N. Katz, President of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), urged the House Appropriations SubcommiTtee on Interior and Related Agencies to fund the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in FY 1988 at its authorized level of $151 million. The administration has requested $126.9 million; last year NEH received $138.5 million.

Katz focused his testimony on NEH support for projects on the bicentennial of the constitution, specifically citing Project '87, a joint project of the American Political Science Association and the American Historical Association, as a major success story of the Endowment's funding. Among its many efforts, the project publishes a quarterly magazine, This Constitution.

Responding to questions from Rep. John Murtha (D-PA), who was sitting in for Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Sidney Yates (D-IL), Katz argued that the Subcommittee should view "the humanities as a system" with NEH as a major player generating "ripples in every direction...benefitting a larger audience than might at first be apparent." Katz also told Murtha that the administration's strategy of substituting private support for government support of the arts and humanities "had not worked."

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BULLETIN:
OPENING STATEMENT PORTENDS DIFFICULT ROAD FOR NSF IN SENATE

In his opening statement at a March 12 hearing on the National Science Foundation, Sen. William Proxmire (D-WI), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on HUD-Independent Agencies, pronounced that "nothing would be more diffcult to do" than to give NSF its 17% increase for FY 1988, or to double its budget by FY 1992. He suggested the need to reduce low-priority research, eliminate duplicative research being supported elsewhere in the federal government, and encourage private sector involvement in basic research. Sen. Proxmire also vowed to resist any new initiatives in the Foundation's budget for FY 1988.

Details of the hearing will be included in the next Update.

"IMPOUNDMENT" OF FUNDS HALTED AT NIH

In its FY 1988 budget released in January, the administration proposed to level off research project funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) by shifting some $334 million from the already appropriated funds for FY 1987 into FY 1988 (see Update, February 13, 1987). The FY 1988 appropriation of new funds would then drop, the drop being cushioned by the carry-over. The effect in this fiscal year would be to cut the number of new grants by 700, and reduce grant size by 10%-25% on the average.

NIH officials, aware that Congress could not complete its work on the new budget for many months, began cutting its FY 1987 grant awards immediately. The stated reason being that, if Congress should accede to the administration's plan, the cutbacks would not be concentrated at the end of the current year, which ends September 30th. On the face of it, NIH's prompt fiduciary action seemed over zealous. The Congressionally approved FY 1987 budget is law; the administration's new scheme was just a proposal. However, the immediate effect, surely not unanticipated, was to cause biomedical research advocacy groups, such as the Association of American Medical Colleges, to prepare to file suit against the government, on the grounds that the cutbacks would cause irreparable harm to researchers and universities -- even if the withheld funds ultimately were restored. Members of House and Senate appropriations committees also protested. The Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education, Sen. Lawton Chiles (D-FL) and Lowell Weicker (R-CT), asked the Government Accounting Office to rule on the legality of the procedure.

Faced with a hornet's next of reaction to NIH's spectacularly dutiful compliance, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on March 3 directed NIH to proceed as Congress had intended. In an odd situation, OMB, whose job is to ensure that executive branch departments follow the administration's policies, wrote NIH, "If, on the basis of [the] President's budget proposal, the Department [i.e., HHS] is withholding or otherwise restricting the availability of funds, please cease such actions."

When Dr. James B. Wyngaarden, NIH Director, appeared before the Chiles subcommittee on March 10, Sen. Weicker reported that he and Sen. Chiles had received a response from the GAO, saying that OMB had "impounded" the $334 million illegally. The very word is significant, because it refers to administration action which would violate the Impoundment and Control Act of 1974. The President's message had carefully used the phrase "extending the availability of funds" from FY 1987 to the next year. Although Sen. Weicker scolded the NIH director at the hearing, saying that NIH should have fought the "impoundment," it was clear on both sides of the bench that an intricate paso doble had been performed. Wyngaarden, on his part, loyally supported the administration's intention to allow continuation costs of grants to rise only about 5% on the average in the foreseeable future, rather than the 15% typical of

recent years. He also spoke up for the administration's "long term policy of stable and sustainable support for the NIH."

From FY 1986 to FY 1987, the NIH budget increased by 17%. Though many observers doubt that such a rate of increase can continue for long, there is little chance that Congress will vote level funding for next year.

GAO ISSUES REPORT ON FEDERAL EVALUATION

The General Accounting Office (GAO) is legally responsible for reporting to Congress on the state of federal evaluation of programs in the nondefense budget. In a report released in late January, the Program Evaluation and Methodology Division of the GAO compared the picture in 1984 to that in 1980. The report concluded that there had been a decline in both funds and personnel devoted to federal evaluation, although the number of evaluation studies remained about the same. The GAO rejects, however, an interpretation of greater efficiency in the enterprise, pointing out that the nature and scope of evaluation studies has changed. "In general," the report says, "low-cost, short-turnaround, internal studies and nontechnical reports...increased in number and as a proportion of all studies; larger, longer, externally conducted studies and more technical reports showed the opposite trend."

The GAO also found less vigorous dissemination of evaluation studies to Congress and the public, "reinforcing the evidence on the change to a more internal character in executive branch studies" and raising a question as to whether Congress is receiving, or asking for, enough information for its oversight of government programs. In this regard, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which reviewed a draft of the GAO report and commented on its methodology and accuracy, stated that program evaluation should serve agency needs, not in the first instance the public and Congress. Thus the OMB believes that the trend toward more internal studies and less formal methods may well suit agency requirements. (OMB's objections are quoted and responded to in the report.)

The study points out that funding and staffing for program evaluation have been more affected in the period since 1980 than funding and staffing for the actual programs. While budget outlays for domestic programs have increased in that period by about 4% (measured in constant 1980 dollars), evaluation expenditures have decreased by about 37%. Particularly hard-hit have been programs funded by block grants to the states and localities. The GAO comments that, to assess the impact and efficacy of such programs, Congress may need to rely more on studies generated locally, although this may make generalizing the findings to the national level more difficult.

The report, entitled Federal Evaluation, was developed at the request of the House Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations and Human Resources, chaired by Ted Weiss (D-NY). It is numbered GAO/PEMD-87-9.

STATE JUSTICE INSTITUTE ISSUES GUIDELINES

The State Justice Institute (SJI) was created in 1984 to improve the administration of justice in the State Courts of the U.S. The Institute has approximately $6.7 million for its FY 1987 program. Guidelines setting forth the Institute's procedures and program areas eligible for funding appeared in the March 9 issue of the Federal Register (pp. 7249-7254).

SJI will support research, evaluation, and demonstration projects in 11 specific areas of special interest. The law establishing SJI gives priority to applications from "State and local courts and their agencies; national nonprofit organizations controlled by, operating in conjunction with, and serving the judicial branch of State governments; and national nonprofit organizations providing for the education and training of judges and support personnel of the judicial branch of State governments."

During the debate on the establishing legislation, Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (D-WI), Chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee that authorized SJI, advocated assuring some awards would go to university researchers -- a position COSSA reiterated in its comments on the proposed program guidelines. Yet the requirement remains that those who are not in the priority groups noted above "have to explain why they will be better able to accomplish the objectives of the proposed program than an applicant designated as a priority recipient."

The Institute is requesting 10-page concept papers by April 17, 1987 for the first round of funding. Awards of up to $500,000 are possible. Reviews will be done by SJI staff. Another round of funding will come in the fall. Concept papers should be addressed to: State Justice Institute, 120 South Fairfax Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Further information may be obtained from David Tevelin, Executive Director, 703/684-6100.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE

John Hammer recently left the COSSA staff to become Executive Director of the National Humanities Alliance (NHA). NHA was established in 1981 to unify the public interest in support of federal programs for the humanities. Similar to COSSA in that it is a coalition of organizations concerned with research and scholarship, the Alliance comprises more than 50 organizations, including professional humanities associations, museums, libraries, historical societies, higher education institutions, and state humanities councils. A number of organizations with interests ranging across the social sciences and humanities participate in both COSSA and NHA.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency rather than COSSA for more information. A comprehensive list of federal funding sources is included in COSSA's Guide to Federal Funding for Social Scientists.

Decision, Risk, and Management Science Program

The Decision, Risk, and Management Science Program (DRMS), located in NSF's Division of Social and Economic Science, supports research directed at increasing the understanding and effectiveness of problem-solving, information processing, and decision-making by individuals, groups, organizations, and society. The overall objective of DRMS is to build an interdisciplinary base for decision-making and management. Primary interest areas include: modeling of operational and managerial processes, risk management, design of organizational processes, and studies of behavioral decision-making.

The DRMS program is strengthening its efforts to encourage collaborative interdisciplinary research across the decision sciences. A special program announcement will soon be released soliciting proposals for programs of research integrating research strategies and disciplinary perspectives in three broad problem areas: (1) risk perception, communication, and management; (2) group decision-making; and (3) artificial intelligence approaches to problem structuring and model building for decision support.

Among the disciplines and fields supported by DRMS are operations research and management science, cognitive psychology, decision analysis, experimental economics, normative and behavioral decision theory, industrial organizations, artificial intelligence, consumer choice, risk analysis, game theory, political science, sociology, organization design, and general systems theory.

FY 1987 Budget: approximately $2.2 million for the DRMS program

Review Process: peer review panels

Deadlines: For the special initiative on interdisciplinary research, submission deadlines are May 15, 1987 and January 15, 1988. For regular DRMS submissions, deadlines are January 15 and August 15.

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Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
Southern Sociological Society
Southwestern Social Science Association
Speech Communication Association
The Institute of Management Sciences

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