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NSF FY 1989 OPERATING PLAN: SES AND BNS UP SLIGHTLY

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has sent Congress its plans for how it would like to spend its FY 1989 appropriation. The HUD-Independent Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees will review the plan and offer suggestions if they disapprove.

Under the NSF operating plan, the social and behavioral sciences receive what amounts to slightly less than an inflation increase. The Division of Social and Economic Science receives a 3.6% increase over FY 1988 spending (\$31.25 million from \$31.15 million). The Behavioral and Neural Science Division receives a 3.7% increase over FY 1988 (\$45.38 million from \$43.78 million). The Directorate of Biological, Behavioral and Social Science (BBS) receives a 5.4% increase over FY 1988. Larger increases within the Directorate went to the Biotic Systems and Resources Division (7.9%) and the new Instrumentation and Resources Division (7.2%), which includes the History and Philosophy of Science and Ethics and Values programs.

The Research and Related Activities account receives an appropriated increase of 8.9% over FY 1988. The plan reveals that NSF will spend \$25 million of that increase to fund 8-12 new Science and Technology Centers. The awards will be announced in November after a review of more than 300 proposals and site

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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.

Victor G. Rosenblum, *President*

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visits to almost 50 possible centers. When the \$25 million is excluded, the Research and Related increase is 7.1%. Congress protected the proposed increases in the budget request for Ocean Sciences, Astronomy and Advanced Scientific Computing, leading to reductions from the request in all other programs.

The Science and Engineering Education Directorate received a 22.8% increase in the appropriations process. In accordance with the wishes of Congress the Teacher Preparation and Enhancement Division receives a 39.5% increase over FY 1988, while the Undergraduate Science, Engineering and Mathematics Education Division receives a 47.4% increase over FY 1988.

The operating plan also confirms for budgeting purposes the reorganization of the Division of Behavioral and Neural Sciences into four programs: Anthropology; Language, Cognition and Behavior; Biological Basis of Behavior; and Neuroscience.<<

KINGSBURY RESIGNS; CLUTTER NAMED 'ACTING' BBS DIRECTOR

David Kingsbury, assistant director for the Biological, Behavioral and Social Sciences Directorate (BBS) at the National Science Foundation (NSF) since June 1984, announced his resignation effective October 15. He will resume his active research career as a professor at George Washington University.

Mary Clutter, director of the Division of Biocellular Sciences in BBS, has been named acting director. Clutter, who has been at the Foundation since 1976, served for two years as the senior science adviser to NSF Director Erich Bloch. She is a plant biologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh.<<

HOUSE COMMITTEE KILLS CENSUS UNDERCOUNT LEGISLATION

In a surprise move, the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee killed legislation that would have amended the U.S. Code to remedy the historic undercount of minorities and the poor in the decennial census of the population. The Committee, chaired by Rep. William Ford (D-MI), failed to approve the measure in a 10-11 vote after Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN) added an amendment that several Democrats found unacceptable. The Burton amendment called for the exclusion of illegal aliens in the decennial census, a measure that the bill's chief sponsor, Rep. Mervyn Dymally (D-CA), claimed was unconstitutional.

Emotions ran high during partisan debate on the amendment. While Republicans argued that an adjustment would be controversial and problematic, Democrats heatedly countered that remedying the undercount is necessary to meet the constitutional mandate to provide the most accurate decennial headcount possible.

Other stakes are involved on each side of the aisle as well. The decennial census affects everything from congressional

apportionment to school districting, from formula grant programs to the way the country defines itself. Democrats believe any increase in the headcount of the poor and minorities would provide advantages for them, while Republicans think they would benefit if the count is not adjusted.

At the start of the session, Ford urged that the issue not be overshadowed by "political fears." He noted that development of a Census Bureau plan to remedy the undercount in the 1990 census was stopped in its tracks last year, an event that led to the resignation of a leading Bureau official who saw "no sound reason for calling off" the project. Ford was referring to Barbara Bailar, then associate director for statistical standards and methodology at the Census Bureau. She now serves as executive director of the American Statistical Association.

Rep. Robert Garcia (D-NY) said he believed the need for adjusting the undercount in 1990 would be greater than ever, as the 1980s have witnessed a marked increase both in the number of homeless and in the number of poor families in the inner cities who "double up" in single-family units. Garcia claimed that the Census Bureau was following politically shaded orders from above when it scrapped its plans to remedy the 1990 census undercount. Referring to the politics of the decision, he added that the Bureau "is an organization that should be left alone by all of us." <<

PROPOSED OERI CENTER SCRUTINIZED AT OVERSIGHT HEARING

Not for the first time, education experts and bureaucrats have severely criticized the federal government's efforts (or lack thereof) to support this country's educational needs through research and development. But this time, the criticism took special aim at the unmet needs of the poorer segments of the K-12 population -- the students considered most at risk of slipping through the cracks in the education system.

Such was the major theme of a recent oversight hearing of the House Select Education Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Major Owens (D-NY). The hearing, held September 29, focused on plans by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to establish an educational research center aimed at examining the needs of the disadvantaged. The hearing marked the second time this year that OERI has come under the Committee's close scrutiny (See Update, April 29, 1988).

While every witness at the hearing acknowledged the need for addressing the educational problems encountered by disadvantaged students, there was some concern as to whether OERI's decision to establish a center was the best or only answer. Most critical was Rep. Owens himself, who claimed in his opening statement that "the review process for the proposed center is being rushed and stampeded for reasons that are not being publicly explained." Owens also expressed his irritation that Chester Finn, outgoing

assistant secretary for OERI, did not attend the hearing as originally scheduled.

While witnesses agreed with the concept of the proposed center, questions remained. Charles Moody, vice provost for minority affairs at the University of Michigan, called the concept of the center "long overdue," but raised questions as basic as how OERI defines the term "disadvantaged," or whether the proposed center is "to become a paper tiger where researchers write research papers for other researchers."

Willis Hawley, chairman of the American Educational Research Association's governmental relations committee, testified that the center was only one of several options available to the Department of Education. For example, the Department could have allocated the funds for the proposed center to existing centers with an eye toward studies relating to the disadvantaged, or OERI could have allowed for reallocation of funds within the existing centers. Likewise, the Department could have established a small-grants competition. Hawley noted that the Department should have also considered the creation of a task force to identify the full range of currently supported research, development, and improvement efforts that could be focused on better understanding the educational needs of the disadvantaged.

Noting that these and other options for addressing the needs of the disadvantaged were not explored, Hawley testified that the idea for a research center on the education of the disadvantaged "has not been part of a carefully developed research and development plan for the nation." Hawley added that implementation of such a center, while acceptable as a first step, must not be seen as evidence that the federal government has done its part to enhance the education of disadvantaged students. A mix of strategies, bold new government support, and better coordination of existing educational programs will be necessary if any real improvements are to be made.<<

ELLIOTT PROVIDES PROGRESS REPORT ON NCES

In 1986, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report vigorously criticizing what is now called the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for its failures to obtain and disseminate education data in a professional and timely manner. The report noted that if wide-ranging actions for improvement were not undertaken, the Center should be abolished. Further evidence of the decline in the support for the Center was conveyed in a 64% decrease (in constant dollars) in congressional appropriations from 1974 to 1984. In addition, staff levels had dropped from 173 in 1980 to 102 in 1986. Now, two years later, NCES Commissioner Emerson Elliott has reported on the responses to the NAS report and the current condition of the agency.

At the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Educational Statistics on September 14-15, Elliott asserted that NCES was clearly "stronger and more adequately serving the public" than it was two or three years ago. Responding to the NAS critique has led to various improvements, including eliminating long-standing data gaps and improving the usefulness of the data for analysis. Actions recently taken by the Center include:

- initiating surveys on schools and staffing to expand information about teachers and principals;
- collecting a congressionally mandated annual data set on school dropouts;
- commencing a longitudinal survey starting with eighth-graders with scheduled biennial followups;
- providing data at the teacher and school level rather than as national aggregates;
- providing more comprehensive information on all postsecondary educational institutions;
- collecting new separate data on student financial aid;
- and conducting a survey of college faculty.

In addition, the National Assessment of Educational Progress will be strengthened, implementing many of the recommendations of the "Nation's Report Card" study chaired by Lamar Alexander, former governor of Tennessee and now president of the University of Tennessee.

Elliott also noted that the Center's technical capability is growing, its staff quantity and quality have increased, and new publication review and clearance procedures have been instituted, with peer review as a major feature. Furthermore, outside advice from diverse sources is sought in reaching decisions about programs and products of the Center. Three Fellows from the American Statistical Association are helping the Center conceptualize an education data system for the 21st Century. All this has been helped by a 2 1/2-fold increase in funding levels from 1986 to 1989. The Hawkins-Stafford Education Improvement Act, passed in 1987, also gave the Center new authority, autonomy, and responsibilities.

Proud of NCES' achievements of the past three years, Elliott conceded that there are still some areas that need improvement. The most pressing, he said, is the development of shared agency norms and expectations to achieve "a unified sense of purpose about the Center's role, who we serve, and how we do things." Elliott added that enhancing collegiality and professionalism combined with greater encouragement of intellectual inquiry and debate are also necessary for NCES to accomplish its mission.<<

CONGRESS TOLD TO GET GOING ON CHILD CARE

The importance of child care quality and the clear need for it demand a strong response at the federal level -- one that goes beyond tax credits, a Senate Committee was told on September 22.

In many ways, testimony presented to the Senate Finance Committee echoed the themes delivered earlier this year at a COSSA-sponsored seminar on day care (see Update, June 24, 1988). The oversight hearing took place with Sen. Spark Matsunaga (D-HI) in the chair, as Sen. Lloyd Bensten (D-TX) was busy elsewhere.

Alfred Kahn, professor at Columbia University's School of Social Work and chief architect of deregulation policies during the Carter administration, noted the importance of child care quality and its implications for socialization skills and, in the longer run, productivity. With an eye toward the issue of quality, the federal government must be willing to set some standards, Kahn testified, provided those standards do not stifle initiative on the part of child care providers.

Arguing that the need for child care is already well-accepted, Kahn offered several recommendations. Among them, he suggested that the federal government help make quality child care affordable to the poor on a sliding scale. He argued that "the country with the best child development research in the world has no reason" to encourage two-tiered approaches to child care, one for the educated middle class and one for the poor. However, he was quick to add that the federal government should not have to foot the bill for all child care supply gaps. Instead, it should concentrate its efforts on planning and start-up costs, some standardization to ensure quality, and technical training and assistance.

Kahn said that while he considers child care tax credits to be a useful instrument of family policy, it cannot be used as an alternative to obtaining urgently needed improvements in the quality provided by the current child care system. Douglas Besharov of the American Enterprise Institute noted at the hearing that he was highly critical of the current child care tax credit, arguing that it helps very few of the truly poor.

The hearing was the latest installment in what promises to be a continuing debate on how the federal government should act. Exasperated by Congress' apparent willingness to do little besides talk about child care and shuffle hundreds of legislative proposals about, Kahn claimed that the issue has been kept "on hold" for over a year. He noted that while Washington has refused to provide any kind of a lead, state and local governments and agencies of all kinds have been moving forward anyway. It's time, he said, for the federal government to catch up.

Meanwhile, Democratic senators are hoping to combine a parental leave bill with the Labor Committee-approved Act for Better Child Care and have the package approved on the Senate floor in the waning days of the 100th Congress. However, Republicans have warned that they are ready to offer a number of unrelated amendments, including their own version of a child-care bill. This casts doubt on whether final action will occur before Congress adjourns.<<

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

Recent research on welfare dependency has indicated that there may be a significant correlation between neighborhood characteristics and individual behavior, often identified as so-called underclass behavior. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) encourages the development of structural theoretical models that can be useful in explaining the causes for the growing incidence of underclass behavior. In general, researchers are asked to examine how neighborhoods and neighborhood residents influence individuals' behavior, especially those neighborhoods where underclass behaviors are widespread.

A broad range of methodologies is acceptable for the purpose of this grant competition, and researchers are encouraged to pursue new and innovative thinking. However, all proposed projects should embody a sound theoretical base upon which new and original empirical work could be based in the future. Models which do not lend themselves to empirical testing are unacceptable.

Application Procedure: Applications can be obtained from the address given below. Requests for applications must be made by November 1, 1988.

Restrictions on Awards: Applications concentrating on a narrow programmatic or policy focus, or on one that is not directed to concerns of national interest, will not be considered for funding. Applications for projects involving empirical analysis, data collection, or demonstrations will not be considered. Successful applicants must be willing to participate in an ASPE-sponsored conference in Washington, DC, to be held in the fall or winter of 1989.

Funding Mechanism: Projects should be completed within a nine-month period. Longer projects will not be considered as the grantees are expected to present their results at the conference mentioned above. A budget of \$200,000 has been set aside, with awards expected to go to single projects of \$50,000 or less. However, ASPE will accept larger requests.

Deadline: November 14, 1988.

Contact: Grants Officer
Office of the Assistant Secretary
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Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for Research in Child Development
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