
CONSORTIUM OF SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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100TH CONGRESS REMAINS IN TOWN: BILLS KEEP PASSING

The elections are 18 days away and the 100th Congress is still in town. As they continue to seek compromises on anti-drug and tax correction legislation, the lawmakers, in the usual end-of-session rush, have managed to pass numerous bills, two of particular interest to social and behavioral scientists. In addition, the Office of Management and Budget has announced that the FY 1989 projected deficit will be \$145.5 billion; thus, sequestration will be avoided by the margin of \$0.5 billion. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicts a \$151.8 billion FY 1989 deficit, which would have triggered sequestration. However, since CBO's views are only advisory under the new Gramm-Rudman-Hollings process, there will be no sequestration this election year. Surprise!<<

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION AUTHORIZATION PASSES

On October 14, the Senate approved the National Science Foundation (NSF) authorization bill (H.R. 4418) and sent it to the President, who is expected to sign it into law. The bill provides a five-year authorization at funding levels that would double the Foundation's budget by 1993. The bill also authorizes the new Science and Technology Centers program, and five years of funding for a new Academic Research Facilities Modernization program. This program, which has no appropriations for FY 1989,

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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*

Howard J. Silver, *Executive Director*

is authorized at \$125 million for FY 1990. It limits this funding to facilities primarily devoted to research, requires merit-review based awards, sets aside 12% of the funds for minority institutions, and includes matching requirements. This provision supersedes the provision for facilities improvement in the Trade bill. H.R. 4418 also drops all of the research and related activities earmarks found in earlier versions of the reauthorization and also deletes the codification of the EPSCOR program and a new College/University Innovation Research program. The bill still contains language requiring a drug-free workplace for grant recipients (see Update, June 24, 1988).<<

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH REAUTHORIZATION PASSES

On October 13, the House passed and sent to the President the "Health Omnibus Programs Extension Act of 1988" (S.2889). Included in this bill was the AIDS legislation (see next story) and the reauthorization of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The bill includes language from the Senate-passed legislation directing NIH to include more social and behavioral scientists on the Institutes' advisory councils (see Update, July 22, 1988). It also includes a provision mandating a report on health-related behavioral research from the NIH director. Previously, this report was suggested by the appropriations committee. (NIH has complied with the suggestion).<<

COMPREHENSIVE AIDS LEGISLATION MAKES IT TO WHITE HOUSE

Congress for the first time has sent comprehensive AIDS legislation to the White House, following a compromise that excluded House provisions to guarantee confidentiality for records relating to AIDS testing. The legislative package -- part of an omnibus health bill (see previous story) -- covers AIDS research, education, testing, and counseling.

Both the House and the Senate passed AIDS bills earlier this year (S.1220 and H.R.5142), but controversial provisions regarding confidentiality prevented them from reaching conference level. Instead, key provisions of both bills (excluding the House guarantee for confidentiality) were tacked onto the health bill and rushed through each chamber by voice vote on October 13.

Key provisions include:

- an annual report from the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to Congress on AIDS research expenditures
- requirements to expedite research grants and contracts
- support for international efforts with a preference for those undertaken by the World Health Organization (WHO), with particular reference to WHO's Special Programme on AIDS, which has been noted for its emphasis on the social and behavioral aspects of AIDS
- expansion of CDC's epidemiological data base

- 780 new employees within the Public Health Service
- a study regarding mortality rates related to AIDS in different population groups
- FY 1989-91 funding for at least six demonstration projects on counseling and mental health services for HIV-infected people
- authorization for \$165 million for FY 1989 and "such sums" thereafter for state and community-based AIDS education programs; \$105 million for clearinghouse and hotline programs; \$45 million for paid advertising
- establishment of a national commission on AIDS to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by the Presidential Commission on the HIV Epidemic
- establishment of a study on minority health and AIDS to determine the effectiveness of prevention programs and the extent of knowledge about AIDS in minority communities

The package also includes a very brief section authorizing HHS, through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), to make grants "for the purpose of assisting grantees in conducting scientific research into the psychological and social sciences" as they pertain to AIDS. The legislation authorizes "such sums as may be necessary" to carry this out. It also calls for the support of fellowship and training programs for behavioral and social science researchers at the graduate and post-graduate levels.

Regarding AIDS education, the package to some extent reflects the advice of behavioral and social health experts who have joined the rest of the medical community and groups such as the Presidential Commission in urging development of direct and explicit education campaigns. Although the bill's language stops short of recommending explicit education for targeted audiences, it does allow for federal funding of such education, provided the material is not obscene and that it mentions the risks of promiscuity and IV drug abuse.<<

HOUSE PANEL STUDIES PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF NAVY MISHAP

The House Committee on Armed Services, chaired by Les Aspin (D-WI), recently examined the relevance of psychological research to military decisions such as those that resulted in the U.S. downing of an Iranian airliner three months ago. At the October 6 hearing, arranged with the assistance of the American Psychological Association, witnesses told Committee members that the development of increasingly sophisticated automation requires a better understanding of the human factors that ultimately decide the success or failure of such gadgetry.

The Committee convened the hearing in the aftermath of the U.S.S. Vincennes' fateful downing of an Iranian airliner in the Persian Gulf last July. The crew of the Vincennes fired at the airliner, thinking it to be an attacking F14 fighter, killing all 290 people aboard the plane.

Defense Department (DOD) officials have since filed a report that "presents an excellent analysis of the events that resulted in a flawed analysis and tragically incorrect decision to fire missiles," Robert Heimreich, psychology professor at the University of Texas at Austin, told the Committee. He noted that according to the report, there was a failure in crew coordination and information transfer on the Vincennes during the course of the incident. Referring to research already conducted in the areas of communication and group dynamics, Heimreich suggested that more research on the selection of crewmembers for critical roles involving team effort "is likely to have a high payoff."

The process of decision-making was also discussed, particularly with regard to the effects of stress. Paul Slovic, psychology professor at the University of Oregon and president of the Decision Research Institute, testified that the military makes little use of what is already known about the decision-making process and the impact of stress and seems unwilling to fund the needed additional research.

Throughout the course of the hearing, Committee members -- particularly Aspin and Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-OK) -- indicated that they were well aware of the importance of understanding the relation between human factors and the use of high-tech military equipment. Members seemed particularly interested in the need for designers to integrate psychological research findings with their development of new high-tech systems.

Stephen Zornetzer, Director of the Life Sciences Directorate within the Office of Naval Research, countered that every branch of the military realizes the importance of human factors in relation to performance during combat or potential combat situations. He added that the military is committed to applying psychological research when necessary.

Referring to the critical intersection where human factors and new technologies meet, Richard Pew of BBN Systems and Technologies Corp. outlined the potential problems with automated systems whose ultimate control and responsibility rest with the people operating them. One danger, he said, lies in the operators' tendency "to regard the computer's recommendation as more authoritative than is warranted." Pew concluded that further study must be done on how much is too much automation.

Richard Nisbett, psychology professor at the University of Michigan and a program director at the University's Institute for Social Research, noted that human factors can play such a dominant role -- particularly in times of stress -- that they may lead an operator to misinterpret the information relayed on a computer screen. He suggested that the most striking error identified in the DOD report was the judgment that the Iranian airliner was descending (and thus judged hostile) when it was, in fact, ascending.

The writers of the DOD report appeared to believe that the initial mistake was itself due to "expectations produced by prior knowledge about the likelihood of attack and the current situation of combat," Nisbett said. This opinion on the part of the writers, he added, was "certainly consistent with psychological research on judgment."<<

HEARINGS ON POVERTY SPOTLIGHT SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Overcoming family poverty should be a domestic priority, according to Rep. George Miller (D-CA), Chairman of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families. To determine methods of achieving that goal, hearings were held on September 22 during which witnesses offered reasons for and policy solutions to the economic and social dislocations that create poor families. Much of the testimony was based on social science research conducted by the witnesses. The hearing was held right before Congress passed and the President signed the major reform of federal welfare programs. Some of the solutions advocated by the witnesses and other social scientists are included in that reform package.

William Julius Wilson, professor of sociology and public policy at the University of Chicago and president-elect of the American Sociological Association, drew upon data recently collected from his research project on poverty and family structure in the inner-city neighborhoods of Chicago; he also drew upon research conducted for his book, The Truly Disadvantaged. Wilson asserted: "The largest single force behind the increasing social and economic marginalization of large numbers of inner-city blacks has been a set of mutually reinforcing spatial and industrial changes in the country's urban political economy that have converged to undermine the material foundation of the traditional ghetto."

These structural shifts, according to Wilson, include the shutdown of industrial plants, the disappearance of manufacturing jobs from the central cities, the general deconcentration of metropolitan economies, and the turn toward service industries and occupations. These, in turn, created economic hardships leading to the deterioration of family structure and the supporting social and cultural institutions of the ghetto. Increasingly significant, Wilson noted, is the depletion of marriageable black men necessary to create stable families. Warning of the economic and social costs of a do-nothing policy, Wilson argued for government-supported child and health care for all Americans, as well as a policy to create public-sector jobs for those unable to obtain employment in the private sector.

David Ellwood, professor of public policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government, provided two simple messages based on research for his book, Poor Support: Poverty in the American Family: "If you work, you shouldn't be poor," and "Children in single-parent homes have a right to exact support

from both parents." The key for working poor families is "to make work pay," he said. Ellwood advocated raising the minimum wage, expanding the earned income tax credit, providing medical insurance, and awarding child-care grants. For single-parent families the key, according to Ellwood, is child-support enforcement. Here, he proposed a system resembling a social security act for children, where employers would take child support out of paychecks. He also advocated welfare reform that includes job-search, training and work programs, though he argued that these programs will not solve the problem by themselves.

Lawrence Mead, associate professor of political science at New York University, argued that research for his book, Beyond Entitlement, demonstrated that the most important reason for family poverty is "nonwork or the fact that poor adults seldom work normal hours." He asserted that "social services and training do little to overcome poverty unless work effort rises." Arguing that "it is difficult to remain poor if one works normal hours," Mead noted that low wages cause inequality among workers, but not poverty. He dismissed the social-barriers-to-work argument, claiming that "child-care responsibilities are not the obstacle to work that many imagine." Mead agreed with Ellwood's and Wilson's support for greater child-support enforcement, but stressed that workfare -- requiring recipients of federal aid to work -- would force clearcut obligations on the client to do something in return for what he or she receives. Wilson disputed Mead's analysis, citing a forthcoming study by John Kasarda, professor of sociology at the University of North Carolina, in the January, 1989, issue of the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Wilson claimed that Kasarda's study will seriously undermine Mead's thesis. Wilson also asserted that Mead does not consider "the complex interaction of economic and social forces" at work in the inner city.

Lisbeth Schorr, lecturer in social medicine at Harvard University and author of Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage, noted the major conclusions of a six-year study conducted under the auspices of the Harvard University Working Group on Early Life, and indicated that research and experience demonstrate, "with hard evidence, that the canard that in the world of social programs, 'nothing works', is in fact a canard." There are successful programs that are helping "to break the self-perpetuating cycle of welfare dependency, alienation and despair." The key is to intervene very early to help the poor and to concentrate on complex, multi-faceted, and sometimes costly programs, she said. Successful programs, Schorr noted, view "the child as part of a family, and the family as part of a neighborhood and community," and cross long-standing professional and bureaucratic boundaries.

Social science research on poverty policy will continue in the coming years with a new emphasis on evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the new welfare reform act.<<

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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

Division of Instrumentation and Resources

The Program for Studies in Science, Technology, and Society is seeking applications for postdoctoral fellowships and professional development awards from scholars who wish to improve their skills in historical, philosophical, ethical, normative, or social science studies of science, engineering, and technology. The Program's major purpose is to link opportunities for original research to further training and study experiences.

The postdoctoral fellowships are intended for recent PhDs in an area of science, technology and society studies. The professional development awards are intended to support established scholars from the fields of science, technology and society studies to improve their understanding of science and technology or to support experienced scientists and engineers wishing to develop or improve science or technology studies skills.

Application Procedure: Applications may be requested from the address and phone number listed below. Contact that address for a complete list of application guidelines.

Eligible Activities: Research may be in any field germane to science, technology and society studies, but projects in 20th-century science and technology, including science and technology policy, are especially encouraged.

Restrictions on Awards: Studies in medicine and society which have a public health or clinical orientation will not be awarded. Applicants must be nationals of the United States. Citizens of other countries who have permanent residency status are not eligible.

Funding Mechanism: Postdoctoral fellowships are generally awarded for one year of full-time research, though the funds may be used over a two-year period. Professional development awards may be used to support full or half-time activities for up to two years.

Deadline: November 15, 1988.

Contact: Rachelle Hollander or Ronald Overmann
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