

COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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SUPPLEMENTAL BILL CLEARS CONGRESS; FY 1990 FUNDING BILLS MOVING

After months of negotiations and weeks of debate, the FY 1989 supplemental appropriations bill finally cleared Congress on June 23. Originally a bill to provide needed funding for veteran's medical care and other programs in dire need of support to survive through the current fiscal year, the bill soon ballooned to include all sorts of goodies. Most significantly, the House planned to add \$832 million in funds for anti-drug programs. Both the White House and Senate balked, arguing that this was too much, too soon, with some of the earmarked programs not even in place yet. The House subsequently backed down, setting the final amount for supplemental funding for anti-drug programs at \$75 million.

Final passage of the bill was also stalled by the insertion in the Senate version of \$75 million for the research and related activities budget of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to rebuild a radio telescope that collapsed last year. (Sen. Robert Byrd [D-WV], in whose state the telescope was located, is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.) A compromise was reached in the final bill to give NSF \$37.5 million in FY 1989 and the same amount again in FY 1990 to rebuild the telescope. A spokesperson for NSF claims the FY 1990 funds for the telescope will not have a significant impact on other items in the Foundation's research budget, since not all of the money for the telescope will actually be spent in FY 1990.

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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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Also surviving the compromise is a provision earmarking \$200,000 for a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) grant to the University of South Carolina from existing FY 1989 appropriations "for the purpose of studying the causes and effects of the increasingly disproportionate use of illegal drugs in the black community." This is contingent on the rescission of more than \$2 million in FY 1989 funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, local law enforcement grants, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. According to the Office of Legislative and Public Affairs at the Office of Justice Programs, this is the first time in memory that Congress has insisted that NIJ make a specific grant for a specific study to a specific university for a specific amount of money. South Carolina's Sen. Ernest Hollings (D) chairs the appropriations subcommittee that makes the funding decisions for NIJ.

The House Appropriations Committee has made its allocation decisions (the 302[b] process) among its 13 subcommittees. The Veterans Affairs (VA)-Housing and Urban Development-Independent Agencies Subcommittee received \$48.05 billion in budget authority and \$53.125 billion in outlays to divide among the programs under its jurisdiction for FY 1990 funding. Many of the agencies and programs within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction are high-outlay items: NSF (which has requested \$2.105 billion for FY 1990), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), VA Medical Care, and Environmental Protection Agency abatement control grants. Because of this, the Subcommittee claims it is about \$1 billion short of what is needed to fund all its programs. It is expected to mark up its bill soon after the July 4th district work period, at which time it will have to make tough choices among housing programs, NASA research and the proposed Space Station, environmental programs, and NSF research and education. As for VA support, Subcommittee Chairman Bob Traxler (D-MI) has vowed to adequately fund VA medical care programs to avoid the need for a supplemental bill next year. Needless to say, it is unclear what the final decisions will entail.

The Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee received a 9% increase in its allocation over last year. Although this is a significant increase, it is still hard to determine whether this is enough to provide the enhanced funding sought for programs under the Subcommittee's jurisdiction, including: research and training at the National Institutes of Health and the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration; research and statistics programs located elsewhere within HHS; education research and statistics and graduate education programs; and labor research.

With the supplemental bill finally out of the way, the House has begun to move the FY 1990 appropriations bills. First out of the blocks is the Energy and Water appropriations bill, which was debated on the floor on June 28. The bill includes \$200 million to begin construction of the Superconducting Super Collider (one

of the "big science" items). The Interior and Related Agencies Subcommittee has marked up its bill and provided \$161 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), an \$8 million increase over FY 1989. Unfortunately, NEH is caught up in the controversy over funding of "offensive" art works by the National Endowment for the Arts; as a result, NEH may face report language that would hamper its ability to fund projects through regrantsing authority.<<

CAFLIS MOVES FORWARD: NATIONAL ENDOWMENT PROPOSED

The Coalition for the Advancement of Foreign Languages and International Studies (CAFLIS) held the final meetings of its three working groups on June 26. The proposals forged at those meetings will be compiled for a statement and plan of action to increase international competence of Americans through greater federal, state, local, and private-sector support for programs to enhance international education and understanding.

Working Group I on Federal Support for International Competence proposed a new National Endowment for International Education and Competence. It also advocated continued support of increased funding for existing programs in this area. The Endowment's structure would preferably take the form of a quasi-autonomous, non-governmental agency (QUANGO), which could receive federal funds and at the same time seek support from non-federal sources.

The Endowment's mission would be: to increase the quantity, diversity, and quality of teaching and learning in the full range of subjects which enhance international understanding; to enhance the quality of research on global issues and strengthen the study of foreign cultures and international relations; and to expand the international knowledge base and perspectives on which American citizens must rely. The Endowment would be given the authority to make grants and assign contracts to support education, study and teaching, research, international exchange, international educational cooperation, and publication and dissemination.

Working Group II on State and Local Initiatives proposed goals for state and local education systems to help students acquire international competence. To achieve these goals, Working Group II suggested: methods for imparting knowledge, including a global perspective incorporated into the education curriculum, from kindergarten through the university level; necessary programs and resources, including enhanced teacher pre-service and in-service training; and necessary institutional and policy changes, including the development of comprehensive state plans and performance standards. The group plans to provide descriptions of successful state-level programs and in-depth policy statements about state and local initiatives.

Working Group III on The Private Sector and International Education will provide the results of a survey of over 300 businesses, assessing their needs and activities in the international education arena. Case studies of collaboration between the private sector and international educators will also be developed. The group recognized the ongoing need to increase the participation of private-sector individuals in discussions like those convened by CAFLIS during the past year and a half.

There was also discussion about a successor organization to CAFLIS, whose foundation-supported, two-year life span is coming to an end. Such a successor to CAFLIS would serve as advocate and clearinghouse for the international education agenda and community.<<

PAPERWORK REDUCTION OR OMB INTRUSION?

As congressional committees begin to scrutinize the impacts of the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), COSSA and other groups interested in information policy have spurred discussions to revise and strengthen the eight-year-old law, which is now up for reauthorization.

Enacted in the final days of the Carter administration, the Act attempted to minimize the perceived growing public burden of rules, regulations, and paperwork. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) increased its power to clear agency information requests (originally a task of the old Bureau of the Budget under the 1942 Federal Reports Act), and increased its power to manage the information resources of the federal government, including dissemination. To carry out these functions, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) was created within OMB.

In the course of its existence, the PRA has raised a number of concerns, one being the Act's bias toward the notion of information collection as a "burden" on the public, rather than as an asset for the efficient running of government.

A further concern has been the impact of clearance procedures on information collection by the federal agencies. After some extensive investigation in 1985-86, COSSA gathered enough evidence to suggest that these procedures were creating a "chilling effect" on the collection of information, especially with regard to surveys and other social science methods and procedures. OIRA desk officers were delaying or denying surveys based on the law's language -- "whether the collection of information by an agency is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility for the agency." COSSA presented its evidence to congressional committees, and in 1986 the House Science, Space and Technology Committee asked the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate. While the resulting GAO study has been completed, it is still undergoing review.

Another area of controversy is OMB's use of the PRA, combined with Executive Order No. 12291, to control the regulatory process. OIRA desk officers conduct reviews to determine whether the proposed rules increase the burden of paperwork, which sometimes leads to delay in implementation or a broad revision of the regulations. Congress has investigated the issue, with hearings convened by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the House Government Operations Committee during the past few years to review OMB's handling of regulations, particularly those promulgated by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Among the Act's stipulations is the call for improvement in the collection, interpretation, and dissemination of federal statistics and the development and implementation of government-wide statistical policies and guidelines. Instead, the Office of Statistical Policy was downgraded, placed in OIRA with a non-statistician as director, and reduced in staff; the Office's envisioned coordination function never became a reality. In attempting to fulfill its second role, OIRA was forced to withdraw its proposed guidelines and policies after major complaints were raised by the statistical agencies and the data-user community. COSSA continues to work with the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) in promoting the enhancement of the Office of Statistical Policy through revisions in the Act's provisions.

The Act also gives OMB power over the federal government's information dissemination policies. OMB Circular A-130 has been the vehicle for OMB's attempt to shift dissemination of government information to the private sector. On June 9, OMB issued a proposed revision to A-130 asserting that government information is a public asset and that the government has the obligation to make "information readily available to the public on equal terms to all its citizens." One issue is how to make computer-stored government information more readily accessible to the public. COSSA is working with the Association of Research Libraries and other groups to codify these new OMB proposals into the Act's revision.

Other issues to be considered include OMB's limited activities in improving the records management of the federal government. The National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History has taken the lead in using the Act's reauthorization as a chance to improve the administration of federal records. Another issue is that of protecting the privacy of individuals who respond to government information requests.

The House Government Operations Committee, chaired by Rep. John Conyers (D-MI), and the Senate Government Information and Regulation Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), have taken the lead roles in the PRA reauthorization process. The

latter subcommittee has already held hearings on a series of information policy questions (see Update May 26, 1989), and on June 12 and 16 turned its attention to possible PRA revisions.

At those June hearings, witnesses from the private sector voiced their support for the Act and referred to its continued value in reducing the immense paperwork burden caused by regulations and information requests. At the same hearings, testimony from public interest groups such as OMB Watch and the Natural Resources Defense Council highlighted the deficiencies in the Act and recommended altering those provisions that have empowered OMB to play what they believe has been an intrusive role in information policy since PRA's passage in 1980.<<

COSSA SEMINAR ILLUSTRATES USES, VALUE OF HIGH-TECH MAPPING

The Information Age has witnessed the birth and continuing development of "digital mapping," a technology that is transforming the way we gather, store, and manipulate spatial information. Known as "geographic information systems" (GIS), it is a tool that can help manage human and environmental resources, as illustrated by five scientists who spoke on the issue at a COSSA-sponsored congressional seminar held June 16.

The seminar, "High-Tech Maps: A Policymaker's Guide to Our Communities, Our Resources, Our Politics," was also sponsored by the Association of American Geographers (AAG), a COSSA Member. The event is the latest installment in an ongoing series of seminars that bring federal policymakers and social and behavioral researchers together. Such seminars primarily are intended to educate the policymakers through the use of social and behavioral research.

The June 16 seminar was moderated by Michael Goodchild, co-director of the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The event's speakers were: David Cowen, director of the Humanities and Social Science Laboratory at the University of South Carolina; David Nystrom, chief of the U.S. Geological Survey Mapping Division's Office of Geographic and Cartographic Research; John Bossler, director of Ohio State University's Center for Mapping; and AAG Executive Director Robert Aangeenbrug. Each used slides to illustrate the topic at hand.

In his opening remarks, Goodchild asked where GIS is going and then answered, "Everywhere, fast." Defining GIS as a data-integration tool that allows one to super-impose information from various sources, Goodchild noted that the technology got off to a slow start. In the past, he said, major barriers have included the high costs of computer hardware and input of geographic information, as well as the need for research to develop the data structures suitable for GIS.

Cowen noted that digital mapping has advanced to the point that even the local administrators from the poorest county in his state (South Carolina) have shown an interest. As for where GIS is headed, Cowen referred to the federal TIGER system as a role model. TIGER -- Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing -- is a geographic support system developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and used by an array of federal agencies. It is a prime example of how different federal agencies can cooperate with one another and coordinate their activities with respect to the collection and use of information, Cowen said. He added, however, that until more people are made aware of TIGER's existence and availability, its true value will not be realized.

In discussing GIS applications, Nystrom observed that digital mapping is not limited to the surface of the land, but can be applied below or above the land as well. It can thus be useful in areas such as geology and hydrology, and can also be used to display data from above, on, and below the surface at the same time. He offered as an example the ability to merge data on geologically volatile (or earthquake-prone) areas with population data for the same areas, thus providing a digital portrait useful to emergency planners. Nystrom also tied GIS to health issues, noting that it has allowed for the "mapping" of such things as lung cancer rates across the country. Such maps can then be merged with data on water quality or other health-affecting variables, resulting in geographic sketches of cause and effect.

Another benefactor of GIS is the environment, according to Bossler, who noted that digital mapping is already being used for the purpose of managing natural resources. As an example, he referred to the Big Darby Creek Research Model, in which GIS is being used to help preserve a pristine wetlands area just west of Columbus, Ohio. In this application and others, Bossler said, GIS "allows us to ask thousands of 'what-if' questions." Such an approach permits scientists to make predictions in a short time frame about alternative solutions to environmental problems, he said.

Aangeenbrug emphasized that the public's sense of and concern about global problems is driving the use of GIS technology. He enthusiastically suggested that as the public further recognizes GIS' potential, there may be an increased call for "modeling and science to (come to) the rescue." Aangeenbrug provided numerous and far-ranging case examples of how GIS is and can be used to address problems such as redistricting, waste management, water pollution, agricultural needs, and educating learning-disabled children.

Echoing the views of the other speakers, Aangeenbrug made clear that many of the technical problems with GIS have been resolved. What is still needed, he said, are more, and standardized, data and increased utilization of GIS in the policy arena.<<

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