



# COSSA

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### **In This Issue**

[COSSA to Celebrate 30th Anniversary at Annual Meeting on November 2 and 3](#)

[COSSA President Pens SCIENCE Editorial](#)

[Congress Leaves Town; Faces Major Budgetary Decisions in Fall](#)

[Merit Review Process Scrutinized by House Panel](#)

[Democrats on SST Committee Release Response to Coburn Report on NSF](#)

[House Agriculture Panel Examines USDA Research Programs](#)

[Defense Department to Run Another Minerva Competition](#)

[NSF Funds Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center](#)

[PRB Releases 2011 World Population Data Sheet](#)

[Susan Olson Named New Head of Law and Society Association](#)

[PCORI Seeks Comments on Research Topic Areas for Potential RFA](#)

[Autism Spectrum Disorders: Psychosocial/Behavioral Interventions and Services Research](#)

[Translational Research: Research Leading to New Health Practices](#)

[NEA Solicits Proposals to Research Value and Impact of the Arts](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

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**COSSA to Celebrate 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Annual Meeting on November 2 and 3**

On November 2 and 3, 2011, in Washington, DC, the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), founded in the midst of a budget crisis in 1981, will celebrate its 30th Anniversary with a day and half symposium on the Social and Behavioral Science Contributions to Public Policy and how the current budgetary situation impacts those contributions. The event will also include the presentation of COSSA Founder Awards and a joyous reception.

For more information and to register for the event go [here](#).

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## COSSA President Pens SCIENCE Editorial

COSSA President Ken Prewitt, professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, at the request of the editors, has written an editorial, "Social Science Spared Again," in the August 5 issue of SCIENCE Magazine.

In the editorial, Prewitt, somewhat responding to the Coburn report (see below), reviews the history of attacks on the social sciences. He particularly notes the Reagan Administration's attempts at defunding in 1981 (which led to the creation of COSSA as an advocacy group). He also notes the original exclusion of these sciences from the National Science Foundation.

Yet, he suggests that despite this exclusion the nation "needed social science" to explore the "human dimensions" of technical policies. And in response to the Reagan cuts, these sciences contributed to America's businesses, which benefitted from operations research, market surveys, employee testing, cost/benefit analysis, and risk assessment.

He concludes that "times have changed" and there is now recognition from natural scientists, conservative social scientists, and business leaders to "support the usefulness of the social sciences."

For the full editorial go to: [www.cossa.org](http://www.cossa.org).

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## Congress Leaves Town; Faces Major Budgetary Decisions in Fall

With its popularity at an all-time low, the Members of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress left town in early August to take a break from trying to deal with the debt and an economy that refuses to grow at a significant rate. Although technically not on a recess, both Houses continue to meet in pro-forma sessions to prevent President Obama from making recess appointments for his nominees stuck in the Senate's non-confirmation process, no legislative work will get done on the floors of either House. (An exception was the settlement of the FAA labor dispute, which the pro-forma session allowed for passage in the Senate with two Members present in less than a minute. Who says the Senate cannot act quickly?)

Behind the scenes, congressional staff, after some rest and recreation, will get back to work preparing for September and beyond. The major decision for August will be implementing the provision of the debt ceiling agreement that creates a 12-member, bipartisan panel, dubbed the Super Committee, that has broad purview in proposing as much as \$1.5 trillion in savings by November 23 that Congress must consider in an up-or-down vote by December 23. The majority and minority leadership in both Houses must name their representatives to this panel by August 16.

### Another Continuing Resolution on the Horizon

The FY 2012 appropriations process has been hindered by the haggling over the debt ceiling increase. Back in January, Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY) hoped that the House would have enacted the 12 spending bills before the August break. So far, the House has passed six. Another three have made it out of the full Appropriations Committee, including the

Commerce, Justice, Science bill, which funds the National Science Foundation, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Among the three not yet acted upon, even at the Subcommittee level, is the huge Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill, which funds the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, all education programs, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The debt ceiling agreement gave the appropriators a \$24 billion present, capping discretionary spending for FY 2012 at \$1.043 trillion. The House had been operating with a \$1.019 trillion cap.

The Senate, which has only passed one FY 2012 spending bill and taken no action on the 11 other bills, may try and mark up some of these in the Appropriations Committee come September. At least, that is the stated aim of panel Chairman Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HA).

September, most likely, will also see activity leading to another Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government running, since it is clear that the appropriations process will not finish before the start of FY 2012 on October 1, 2011. Then sometime later in the fall, Omnibus Spending Legislation will get put together that will include all 12 appropriations bills. Then we will all wait for the Thanksgiving present from the Super Committee in late November.

In the meantime, external actors may have more to say about the economy that will further complicate life for the decision makers. Have a nice break!

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## Merit Review Process Scrutinized by House Panel

On July 27, the House Science, Space and Technology Committee's panel on Research and Science Education, chaired by Rep. Mo Brooks (R-AL), held a hearing on *The Merit Review Process: Ensuring Limited Federal Resources are Invested in the Best Science*.

Given the Subcommittee's jurisdiction, the hearing mostly focused on the merit review process at the National Science Foundation (NSF). Chairman Brooks noted that in FY 2010 NSF received over 55,000 proposals and funded nearly 13,000 or 23 percent. Since "many were not funded because federal funds are limited...those limited dollars should go to the very best scientific research...NSF must maintain a robust and transparent merit review process," Brooks asserted.

The panel's hearing comes in the midst of another examination of the process by the National Science Board (NSB), whose Task Force on Merit Review is chaired by Alan Leshner, CEO of the AAAS, and John Bruer, President of the James S. McDonnell Foundation. The NSB's interest is to "determine the way the current criteria [Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts], and their instructions, are interpreted and utilized by both proposers and NSF program staff." Of particular concern is the interpretation of the second criteria, which would ask the reviewers to determine whether the proposal addresses "national goals."

The hearing also explored this specific item in the context of the overall broader subject. Witnesses at the hearing were: Cora Marrett, NSF Deputy Director; Keith Yamamoto, Vice Chancellor for Research at the University of California, San Francisco; Nancy Jackson, President, American Chemical Society; and Jorge José, Vice President for Research at Indiana University.

All the witnesses strongly defended the merit review process. As José proclaimed, "the merit review system is the most effective process we have for ensuring that federal funds are used most effectively in support of scientific research, in particular at this time of limited resources when we need to prioritize how the taxpayer's dollars are best invested."

Brooks inquired about the sometimes disregard of review panels in final funding decisions at NSF. Marrett reminded the Subcommittee that NSF's peer review panels only provide "recommendations" to the program directors who can revise these to "balance the portfolio" among areas within a

discipline or area in making those decisions.

Yamamoto, who led the committee that revised the NIH Peer Review process, expressed concern about the "national goals" criteria. He testified that "this criterion, as stated, would in my view adversely affect the merit review process because it departs from the singular focus on scientific merit that is essential to the process, and because it obligates peer reviewers to judge grant applications by metrics outside of their expertise."

José also expressed concern about the proposed expansion of the "Broader Impacts" criterion. He suggested that his worry was not that "this expanded list might alter the appropriate balance between intellectual merit and broader impacts in funding decisions," but it will "diminish the NSF's admirable and necessary leadership in promoting the participation of underrepresented groups in the sciences."

Jackson recommended reducing the burden on peer reviewers and program officers by allowing the latter to "triage" grant proposals. The program officers, Jackson testified, should decide which grants could not be "competitive" and were not worthy of funding and remove them from the merit review process.

Ranking Member Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL) expressed his interest in alternatives to standard merit review. He was delighted to hear from Marrett that his provision to authorize prizes, included in the America COMPETES reauthorization last year, was close to implementation. Lipinski also suggested that NSF conduct "tutorials" for members of Congress on the working of the merit review process. This is an idea that Marrett approved and noted that NSF is always seeking feedback on its programs and activities.

There was also a lot of discussion about "virtual peer review panels," which NSF is experimenting with. Although the hypothesis is that these "virtual" panels would save NSF travel money and expand the pool of reviewers, Marrett indicated this may not hold. Lipinski also expressed concern that "the group dynamics in a virtual environment, while certain to be different, do not in any way undermine the quality of NSF merit review." Marrett told the panel, that researchers funded by NSF's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate have conducted many studies of group dynamics whose results will serve as important input to NSF decision-making on the virtual panel proposal.

The witnesses' written testimony and an archived recording of the hearing is available at: <http://science.house.gov/hearing/research-and-science-education-subcommittee-hearing-merit-review-process-federal-funding>.

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## Democrats on SST Committee Release Response to Coburn Report on NSF

On July 27, the Democratic minority on the House Science, Space and Technology Committee (SST), Ranking Member Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), released a staff report, [Out of Focus: A Critical Assessment of the Senate Report, "The National Science Foundation: Under the Microscope."](#)

The Democrats' report is a response to the earlier document produced by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) that was strongly critical of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and included a call for the elimination of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate (see Update, [May 31, 2011](#)). The SST panel Democrats conclude that Coburn's report "makes no coherent argument about why, for example, studying the changing face of American democracy is inherently less important than funding a physics or chemistry experiment."

Coburn's report also cited numerous individual grants as "questionable studies." These included many in the social sciences, including the American National Election Studies (ANES) and the Panel Study on Income Dynamics (PSID). The committee staff reached out to the researchers whose work the

Coburn report criticized sending them a five question survey. Of the 52 researchers contacted, 39 responded. In almost all the cases, Coburn's staff had never contacted the researchers of the "questionable" grants. They all suggested the Coburn report's characterizations of their research were inaccurate.

Here is the response of Arthur 'Skip' Lupia, Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan and former co-director of the ANES:

"The ANES provides data to the nation and the world that is matched by no other entity...For over 60 years researchers have used this data to clarify many important aspects of how people feel about past actions of government, and how such feelings affect their willingness to contribute to society in a range of different ways, from the workplace to the ballot box, to a range of volunteer organizations. The ANES is used by tens of thousands of scholars, teachers, journalists, and citizens around the world to not only better understand the current state of American democracy, but to compare the present to the past...Our goal is to support the legitimacy and vibrancy of American democracy by producing credible measures of individuals' relationship to their government and to their country."

Charles Brown, Professor of Economics at the University of Michigan and co-director of the PSID, told the committee staff: "The worst feature of the discussion of the PSID is that it refers to one study using the data, which they find insufficiently interesting to merit government funding, and then reports the amount that NSF has provided to support the entire project. Someone who read only this report would never learn that PSID data is used by federal agencies, has inspired similar studies in other countries around the globe, etc."

Former American Political Science Association President Henry Brady of the University of California, Berkeley, also derided the Senator for misrepresenting his study on "The Costs of Voting." Coburn criticized the research "for helping party leaders learn strategies to increase voter turnout." Brady and his colleague Tom McNulty of Binghamton University told the Democratic staff that the intended audience for the study was not party leaders, but social scientists and academics to "substantially advance the body of knowledge in the field of voting behavior," and "non-partisan election administrators, whose task it is to conduct free and fair elections as efficiently, inclusively, reliably, and securely as possible."

The now infamous "Shrimp on a Treadmill" study, which the AARP has been using in television ads to denigrate scientific research, was also defended by its Principal Investigators, Biology Professors Louis Burnett and Karen Burnett of the Grice Marine Laboratory at the College of Charleston. The Burnetts noted that the study that utilized the treadmill experiment is part of a much larger research effort to determine how to maintain healthy populations of marine organisms "to bring important economic and ecological benefits to the U.S. and worldwide."

The Democratic staff concluded that Coburn's report results in "reverse earmarks," in which congressional staff picks winners and losers among scientific projects. This is probably not the kind of merit review envisioned by NSF and the National Science Board (see previous story).

In addition, the Democrats' report criticizes Coburn's claims of other wasteful spending by NSF concluding that these "claims were unsubstantiated and reflected a misunderstanding of appropriations law, grant management practices, and the actual findings of Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports."

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## House Agriculture Panel Examines USDA Research Programs

On July 28, the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Rural Development, Research, Biotechnology and Foreign Agriculture held a hearing to examine U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) research programs. This was the ninth in a series of audits of USDA farm programs by the Committee, aimed

at gaining an understanding of current practices before legislators move forward in penning a new Farm Bill.

The Subcommittee heard from the administrators of all four agencies that handle research for the USDA and are under the purview of the Under Secretary of Research, Education, and Economics (REE). Testifying were Edward Knipping, Agriculture Research Service (ARS) Administrator, Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Acting Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Cynthia Clark, Administrator of the National Agriculture Statistics Service, and Laurian Unnevehr, Acting Administrator of the Economic Research Service (ERS).

At the outset of the hearing, Chairman Tim Johnson (R-IL), noted how vital the research provided by these organizations is to the USDA and the government at large, but immediately segued to the fact that the government faces a difficult fiscal environment in which cuts must be made. In each area of research the Committee was looking for "opportunities to streamline" and teasing out what it felt could be cut. Ranking Member Jim Costa (D-CA) noted that research has been a vital part of USDA's mission for over 100 years and underlined its value, referring to it as "bone marrow," but he also echoed the Chairman's comments that the Committee was looking for how to get "more bang for our buck" in terms of competitive research dollars. Costa also noted that he would pay particular focus to the Specialty Crop Research Initiative. Its mandatory funding expires after 2012 and he asked for thoughts on how to address "the unique needs of specialty crops" going forward. Specialty crops, contrary to what the name might seem to imply, represent half the value of the US agriculture industry, Costa explained, but the 2008 legislation was the first time some special assistance went to these crops.

In the course of the hearing, Knipping defended the need for government-funded studies, positing that research for the public good cannot and will not be done by commercial enterprises if government agencies refuse to fund it. Clark seconded this point, noting that you cannot rely on private data to be complete or publicly available, and furthermore it often does not reflect the reality of the current situation.

Jacobs-Young, acting head of the very young NIFA, defended the progress the agency has made so far, pointing out that the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) has been pivotal in mapping genomes of vital agricultural commodities including wheat, rice, pigs, cattle and chickens; this research allows us to meet our growing agricultural needs. She also touched on Congressman Costa's main concern, noting that the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) supports research and extension in plant breeding, production management and efficiency.

For copies of the testimony and an archived video of the hearing go to:  
<http://agriculture.house.gov/hearings/hearingDetails.aspx?NewsID=1430>.

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## Defense Department to Run Another Minerva Competition

The Department of Defense (DoD) has issued a Broad Agency Announcement for a new competition in the Minerva Research Initiative (MRI). This Initiative, initially fostered by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' interest in greater DoD involvement with the social sciences, "draws upon the knowledge, ideas, and creativity of the nation's universities, to foster a new generation of engaged scholarship in these sciences that seeks to meet the challenges of the 21st century."

According to DoD, "the goal of the Minerva Initiative is to improve DoD's basic understanding of the social, cultural, behavioral, and political forces that shape regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S." The research program will:

- Leverage and focus the resources of the Nation's top universities, analogous to the Cold War development of Kremlinology and game theory.
- Seek to define and develop foundational knowledge about sources of present and future conflict with an eye toward better understanding of the political trajectories of key regions

of the world.

- Improve the ability of DoD to develop cutting-edge social science research, foreign area and interdisciplinary studies, which is developed and vetted by the best scholars in these fields.

In 2009, DoD funded seven awards in its program and another 17 in a joint solicitation with the National Science Foundation.

The 2011 MRI solicits white papers and full proposals that propose basic research in the following seven topics:

1. Strategic Impact of Religious and Cultural Changes
2. Terrorism and Terrorist Ideologies
3. Science, Technology and Military Transformations in China and Developing States
4. National Security Implications of Energy and Environmental Stress
5. New Theories of Cross-Domain Deterrence
6. Regime and Social Dynamics in Failed, Failing, and Fragile Authoritarian States
7. New Approaches to Understanding Dimensions of National Security, Conflict, and Cooperation

DoD will consider proposals both for single-investigator awards as well as larger, multi-institution teams. DoD anticipates that the single investigator awards will range from \$30,000 to \$500,000 per year, with typical awards in the range of \$100,000 to \$300,000 per year. Awards in the upper end of the range will be made only for extremely meritorious proposals. Each individual award will be for a maximum term of three years.

Large team awards will range from \$500,000 to \$2 million per year, with typical awards in the range of \$1 million to \$1.5 million per year. Awards in the upper end of the range will be made only for extremely meritorious proposals. Each team award will be for a three year base period with one two-year option period to bring the total maximum term of the award to five years.

This MRI competition is open to institutions of higher education (universities), including DOD institutions of higher education and foreign universities. Non-profit institutions and commercial entities are also eligible to compete as collaborators on university-led proposals.

The applications will undergo a multi-stage evaluation procedure. The respective evaluation panels composed of government subject matter experts and members of the academic community will assess proposals first. Findings of the evaluation panels will then be forwarded to senior DoD officials who will make funding recommendations to the awarding officials standard criteria in addition to program balance and the availability of funds.

**Response Due Dates: White Papers: Thursday, 1 September 2011. Full Proposals: Monday, 7 November 2011.**

For further information contact: Dr. Erin Fitzgerald, [Erin.Fitzgerald.ctr@osd.mil](mailto:Erin.Fitzgerald.ctr@osd.mil).

For the full solicitation go to:

[http://www.arl.army.mil/www/pages/8/research/Minerva\\_Draft\\_BAA\\_Final\\_July2011.pdf](http://www.arl.army.mil/www/pages/8/research/Minerva_Draft_BAA_Final_July2011.pdf)

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## NSF Funds Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced that it has awarded \$27.5 million to the University of Maryland to fund a National Socio-Environmental Center, known as SESYNC. The center is the newest in a series of synthesis centers—centers that bring together and meld research from many disciplines of science—funded by NSF over the last 15 years. It is the first of these centers to integrate the natural sciences and social sciences, previous centers focused on natural sciences only.

According to NSF, SESYNC will function as a multidisciplinary center that draws on the expertise of environmental, social and computational scientists, engineers and public policy experts through extensive national and international partnerships. It will focus on "research on such issues as water availability, sustainable food production, and the interaction between human activities and ecosystem health." NSF notes that "the center is grounded in the philosophy that solutions to urgent environmental problems require cooperation among natural and social scientists and policy-makers."

Margaret Palmer, a University of Maryland environmental scientist, will direct the new center, which will be located in Annapolis, MD. Joan Nassauer of the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources will lead the social science effort.

The Center intends to combine fundamental, discovery-driven synthesis research on global environmental problems with a commitment to communicate scientific insights to decision-makers and stakeholders. According to NSF, at SESYNC scientists and policy-makers "co-identify relevant research needs and ways to ensure that the products of fundamental discovery are linked to interactions among social and environmental scientists and decision-makers at all levels."

SESNYC also expects to support projects that enhance understanding of how humans can thrive in the environments on which they depend. Projects will address questions such as: what is the relationship between cultural values and conventions and the sustainability of natural resources like water? How do societies manage resources that cross human-defined political boundaries? How can governance systems effectively address these issues?

In addition, the Center will integrate education and outreach activities throughout its programs, with the goal of expanding the ability of researchers, students and stakeholders to integrate environmental science with social science research and knowledge.

Besides the Universities of Maryland and Michigan, other partners in the venture include: Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research-UFZ (Germany); Environment for Development Initiative (EfD) at the University of Gothenburg (Sweden); Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; Gallaudet University; Washington State University at Vancouver; Coppin State University and Resources for the Future.

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## PRB Releases 2011 World Population Data Sheet

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), a COSSA member, has released a report: *2011 World Population Data Sheet: The World at 7 Billion*. The report is full of demographic data on all countries of the world as well as health and environmental indicators. The report includes results from the 2010 U.S. census, United Nations' reports, and other countries' official national data counts.

PRB reports that the world's population will reach seven billion in 2011, which despite declining birth rates in many countries, still continues "the most rapid [global] population growth in history." It took only 12 years to go from six billion to seven billion. Birth rates will have to remain in decline in order not to exceed the eight billion mark in 12 years.

According to the report, there are four phases of demographic transition evident in the world's population: 1) High Birth Rate, Fluctuating Death Rate; 2) Declining Birth and Death Rates; 3) Birth Rate Approaching Replacement; and 4) Low to Very Low Birth Rate, Very Low Death Rate. In examining countries around the world Afghanistan and Uganda represent number one. Ghana and Iraq fall into the second category. India and Malaysia represent category three. And Brazil, Germany, and Japan are examples of number four.

The five most populous countries in 2011 are: China, India, U.S., Indonesia, and Brazil. Projecting



to 2050, PRB expects India to overtake China as the world's largest nation, with Nigeria moving to number three and Pakistan to number five, displacing Indonesia and Brazil. The U.S. would be fourth.

PRB indicates that the country with the youngest population (percent under 15) is Niger, with the top ten nations in this category all in Africa. Japan, with 23.2 percent of its populations over 65 has the oldest population, with the countries of Europe - Germany, Italy, Greece, and Sweden rounding out the top five.

The report also includes the news that the growth in the youth population in the Middle East "has slowed and even is declining in some countries," perhaps hindering the recruitment of terrorist organizations. At the same time, "poverty remains a significant problem worldwide," PRB notes, with the Congo, Democratic Republic as the poorest nation, with 80 percent of its population earning less than \$2 U.S. dollars a day. Surprising to some, may be that India is second in this category at 76 percent.

Infant mortality rates remain high in the least developed world with a rate of 76 deaths under age one per 1,000 population. The number for the more developed world is five. The report includes indicators of migration that show large in-migrations to countries such as Qatar, Singapore, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Luxembourg, and as can be expected large out-migrations from Somalia and Libya as well as Lithuania.

Finally, HIV/AIDS continues to remain a problem, according to the report, in Southern and Eastern Africa, with infected populations over 20 percent in Botswana and Swaziland, and above 10 percent in South Africa, Namibia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

For a copy of the full report go to: [www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org).

For further examination of world population issues see SCIENCE Magazine July 29, 2011.

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## Susan Olson Named New Head of Law and Society Association



The Law and Society Association (LSA), a COSSA member, has announced the appointment of Susan Olson as its new Executive Director effective September 1, 2012. She will replace Ronald Pipkin, who has led LSA since 1987.

Olson is currently Associate Vice President for Faculty and Professor of Political Science at the University of Utah. She has been at Utah since 1986 teaching in the Political Science Department, serving as Department Chair from 1997 to 2000 and as Associate Vice President for Faculty since 2000.

Prior to going to the University of Utah, Olson was an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota (1979-86). In 1978, Olson served as a Research Assistant for the Committee on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice at the National Academy of Sciences. In 1985-86, Olson was a Judicial Fellow at the Federal Judicial Center.

Olson's research focuses broadly on the ways that the legal system aggregates and transforms personal concerns into broader issues of public policy. She has written on the use of law to bring about social change by women and persons with disabilities as well as by American Indians. She has published two books: *Clients and Lawyers: Securing the Rights of Disabled Persons* and *Native Vote: American Indians, the Voting Rights Act, and the Right to Vote* book in collaboration with Daniel McCool and Jennifer Robinson. She has also published numerous articles in political science and legal journals, including *Law & Society Review*, *Journal of Politics*, *Polity*, *Law and Policy*, *Judicature*, *Justice System Journal*, *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, *Utah Law Review*, and *Journal of*

## *Social Philosophy.*

The new Executive Director has had extensive experience with the LSA having served on its Board of Trustees from 1988-91 and as a member of several LSA committees: Membership and Professional Issues (MPIC), Article Prize, Membership, Student Paper Awards. She has also served on the Editorial Board of the *American Journal of Political Science* and the *Western Political Quarterly* as well as two prize committees for the American Political Science Association.

Olson received her B.A. from Pomona College and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Public Affairs.

The search committee that selected Olson was chaired by Felice Levine, Executive Director of the American Educational Research Association, another COSSA member.

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## **PCORI Seeks Comments on Research Topic Areas for Potential RFA**

The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research (PCORI) has announced its intention to issue a request for applications (RFA) in late September 2011 for a series of grants for "Tier 1 Pilot Projects." According to PCORI, the pilot projects will: 1) assist PCORI in establishing national priorities for research, 2) support the development of novel methods or the collection of preliminary data that can be used to advance the field of patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR), and 3) inform the development of a future PCORI research agenda.

Accordingly, PCORI has identified eight initial areas of interest for the pilot projects. This request is for input on the pilot project topics, not a request for applications for pilot project grants. The pilot projects will focus on methods and approaches appropriate to PCORI, including observational methodologies, systematic reviews, mixed methods and qualitative methodologies, simulations, small pragmatic pilot trials and survey methods. The projects will not include clinical efficacy studies on specific conditions or interventions or randomized clinic trials. **The deadline for input is 11:59 p.m. EST on Wednesday, August 31, 2011.**

The eight topics are:

1. Developing, testing, and/or evaluating novel methods and approaches that can inform the process of establishing and updating national priorities for the conduct of patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR).
2. Developing, testing, and/or evaluating methods for bringing together patients, caregivers, clinicians and non-traditional partners in all stages of a multi-stakeholder research process, from the generation and prioritization of research questions to the conduct and analysis of a study to dissemination of study results.
3. Developing, testing, and/or evaluating novel processes for translating research findings into changes in health care practices.
4. Developing, testing, and/or evaluating approaches that could systematically, without bias, identify gaps in evidence that most affect low-income populations; minorities; children; elderly; women; people with disabilities, multiple medical conditions, rare conditions, and other vulnerable populations.
5. Identifying, testing, and evaluating novel predictive outcomes instruments of interest to patients.
6. Identifying, testing, and evaluating novel methods for researching behaviors, lifestyles, and choices within patient control that may influence their outcomes.

7. Identifying, testing, and evaluating novel methods for studying the patient-clinician interaction in situations where multiple options exist.

8. Identifying, testing, and evaluating methods to assess strategies that respect patient autonomy and promote informed decision-making, incorporating the best healthcare knowledge into the application of care.

For more information and/or to provide input go to:

<http://www.pcori.org/provideinput/tier1input.html>

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders: Psychosocial/Behavioral Interventions and Services Research

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders (NIDCD) are seeking to facilitate exploratory research on psychosocial/behavioral treatments and innovative services research for autism spectrum disorders. The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), *Psychosocial / Behavioral Interventions and Services Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders (PA-11-283)*, is intended to encourage research on:

- 1) The development and/or pilot testing of new or adapted interventions or instruments;
- 2) Pilot testing novel interventions in preparation for larger efficacy trial; and
- 3) Innovative services research directions that require preliminary testing or development.

According to the FOA, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) share a cluster of impairments in reciprocal social interaction, communication and the presence of stereotyped behavior, interests, or activities. These complex disorders are usually lifelong duration and affect multiple aspects of development, learning, and adaptation at home, in school, and in the community. Research suggests that early intervention can result in significant improvements for some children with ASD. It is difficult, however, to predict which children will benefit from any of the available treatments, and there is currently no universally accepted medical or biological treatment for the core features of ASD. There is also a paucity of research addressing interventions and services across the lifespan in ASD.

Exploratory grants for interventions and services research are designed to support the early phases of intervention development or adaptation, protocol development and preliminary pilot testing to support a full-scale efficacy or effectiveness study, and innovative services research.

Examples of research topics related to interventions covered under the FOA include:

- Studies that relate phenotypic characteristics of individuals with ASD to treatment outcomes.
- Development and testing of interventions for infants and toddlers who are at-risk for ASD.
- Studies of adapted/novel treatments for nonverbal school-aged children with ASD.
- Development of innovative treatments that specifically target core symptom clusters unique to ASD.
- Studies of the relationship between family variables and treatment outcome.
- Research examining the effects of psychosocial/behavioral intervention on parents and families of individuals with ASD.
- Studies seeking to validate outcome measures that are sensitive to treatment effects, generalize across settings (e.g., from treatment setting to school, home, etc), and which can be used to assess intervention outcomes across activities and task demands.
- Research examining psychosocial/behavioral treatments in under-represented populations, such those living in rural areas, or non-English speaking individuals with ASD.
- Studies seeking to translate findings from research on basic behavioral and neurobiological

processes (e.g., cognition, attention, emotion) into applied interventions.

- Research specifically focused on developing interventions targeted to youth with ASD who are transitioning to adulthood, or other important periods of transition, especially those in later life, with incorporation of measures to assess functional outcomes.
- Studies to refine and/or adapt specific existing psychosocial/behavioral interventions for individuals with ASD.
- Research focusing on basic design issues, such as those dealing with confounding effects of pharmacologic treatments in behavioral treatment trials, those comparing levels or intensity of intervention; and those comparing single subject, small group, and/or large group approaches.

Examples of research topics on services for persons with ASD across the lifespan include:

- Studies on the organization, delivery and financing of interventions and services for ASD and the impact these factors have at the individual, family, program, and systems levels in specialty health, primary care, and other delivery systems (e.g. the school system, etc).
- Research on how evolving technologies, programs and policies affect the access to and delivery of services to people with ASD, including studies of underserved populations.
- Research on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of services and support to improve the community functioning of people with ASD, including strategies to enable integrated education, post-secondary education, supported employment, independent living, etc.
- Research to develop and test the effectiveness of services to assist people with ASD and/or their families in navigating complex systems to obtain needed services and supports.
- Studies to determine the impact of coordination strategies among State and local mental health and other agencies on improving functional outcomes of people with ASD and the cost-efficiency of such strategies.
- Research on the effectiveness of widely used but under-studied services for persons with ASD, including diagnostic, treatment, rehabilitative and support services.
- Research using quantitative or mixed methods approaches to identify factors that impede or facilitate service access for persons with ASD and develop and pilot test strategies to overcome or enhance these factors.
- Studies to evaluate the effectiveness of provider training and decision support in improving quality of care and clinical outcomes for people with ASD across the life span.
- Studies to determine what aspects of self-directed services are most effective and cost-effective in for enhancing community functioning of people with ASD.

Applications will begin accepting applications on September 16, 2011. For more information and/or to apply see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-11-283.html>.

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## Translational Research: Research Leading to New Health Practices

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) has released a funding opportunity announcement (FOA), T 2 Translational Research: *Research Leading to New Health Care Practices, Community Programs and Policies Affecting Older Persons* (PAS-11-281), to encourage exploratory/developmental research projects on translational research directed towards development of health care practices, community programs and policies, including monitoring and quality improvement for pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches for preventing and treating key health issues affecting the elderly.

According to the FOA, the pace at which new knowledge from clinical studies that demonstrate efficacious interventions is incorporated into effective new approaches for prevention and treatment of age-related conditions has been slow. As a result, many important geriatric conditions such as falls prevention, urinary incontinence, pain and multiple chronic conditions have

efficacious prevention and therapeutic options that have not been translated into effective approaches that can be widely disseminated.

Relevant topics for T2 translational research include:

- Primary care, hospital-based or community-based fall-prevention strategies for older adults, such as screening for at-risk individuals and interventions to reduce risk (e.g., exercise, balance training).
- Improving delivery of behavioral techniques (e.g., bladder training, pelvic floor exercises) for management of bladder problems/urinary incontinence in community-dwelling older adults and in long term care facilities.
- Clinical or population-based strategies to improve appropriate medication prescribing and administration in older adults; e.g., minimization of toxicity through appropriate dosing that considers pharmacokinetic alterations in elderly populations; improvement of strategies to minimize interactions among prescription drugs and/or between prescription drugs and over-the-counter drugs or nutraceuticals.
- Improving our understanding of risk/benefit profiles of therapeutic interventions for older adult patients. For example, while clinical trials are designed to demonstrate safety and efficacy of new drugs (or combination of drugs) in a limited patient population, additional side effects or adverse events may be revealed after the product is introduced into the general population. Analysis of data sets on medication usage or post-marketing surveillance information could help to increase our understanding of safety and effectiveness of drug therapies for older adults.
- Hospital- and community-based strategies for pain management for older adults.
- New tools for the assessment and/or management of persons with multiple chronic conditions. Testing the feasibility of an intervention intended to change behaviors such as retirement investing, weight loss and its maintenance, or the establishment and maintenance of an exercise/activity program.

**NIA will begin accepting applications on September 16, 2011.** For more information see <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAS-11-281.html>.

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## **NEA Solicits Proposals to Research Value and Impact of the Arts**

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is soliciting proposals that will help lead to greater public understanding of the contribution of the arts. NEA seeks "to expand the body of evidence for the value and impact of the arts."

The current solicitation seeks research that investigates the value and impact of the U.S. arts sector through the analysis of existing and/or newly established datasets. Grantees may use either existing or newly established datasets to conduct their research, for example:

- Longitudinal databases of Early Childhood and High School education (National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education)
- American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau)
- Current Population Survey and related supplements (U.S. Census Bureau)
- American Time Use Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor)
- Cultural Data Project (The Pew Charitable Trusts)

The resulting projects will help determine the usefulness of various datasets to arts-related research-including those not previously used for that purpose. Through this grant opportunity, the NEA hopes to further expand the pool of researchers knowledgeable about arts and culture datasets.

The NEA encourages applicants from diverse backgrounds, including those who have not specialized in arts-related research. Although applicants must be nonprofit organizations, they are encouraged

to partner with for-profit entities, and/or use commercial and/or administrative datasets.

The NEA anticipates awarding up to 25 grants in the range of \$10,000 to \$30,000. The deadline for applications is November 8, 2011.

For further information: [nearesearchgrants@arts.gov](mailto:nearesearchgrants@arts.gov).

The full solicitation is available at: <http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/Research/index.html>.

## Editor's Note

With Congress on its annual summer recess, COSSA Washington Update will go on hiatus until September 8, 2011. Have a great rest of the summer!

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