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Congressional Leaders Announce Agreement on Six Month CR: Political Science at NSF and Economics at NIH Safe for Now

In order to remove debates over individual FY 2013 appropriations bills from the arguments anticipated in the post-election lame-duck session over taxes and sequestration, the House and Senate leadership announced they had reached an agreement to start the new fiscal year on October 1, 2012 with a Continuing Resolution (CR) that would last six months.

Congressional staff will work out the details of the CR over the August recess and the bill will come to both the House and Senate floor sometime in September. The leaders agreed that the discretionary spending cap in the CR would be based on the $1.047 trillion agreed to in the Budget Control Act of 2011, not the House's 2012 Budget Resolution figure, which is $19 billion less. Most agencies will likely receive funding at the FY 2012 level.

The leaders also agreed that the CR would be relatively clean without policy riders. Thus, the political science program at the National Science Foundation (NSF), eliminated by the House during its passage of the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Act (see Update, May 14, 2012), will remain safe for another six months. The same is true for economics research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), zeroed out by the House Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations Subcommittee (see Update, July 23, 2012). COSSA organized a letter to the House and Appropriations leadership calling for the elimination of this proposed provision. The letter was signed by nearly 100 national organizations and universities.

What will happen next March would depend on who controls the legislative and executive branches of the American government and we won't know that until after November 6.

Legislation to Reduce Senate-Confirmable Positions and Create a Fixed Term for Census Director Goes to President

On June 29, 2011 the Senate passed, by a vote of 79-20, a bill, S.679, that would reduce the number of executive positions subject to Senate confirmation and create a fixed term for the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. The bill lingered in the House until July 31, 2012 when under the suspension calendar that body took up the legislation and passed it by 261-116, securing the necessary 2/3 majority. Since the House approved the same bill that passed the Senate, the bill goes directly to the President for his signature.

Among the executive positions no longer requiring Senate confirmation are the heads of all the components of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs. These include the directors of the National Institute of Justice, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Juvenile Justice
Five Year Fixed Term for Census Bureau Director

S.679 also includes a section dealing with the appointment of the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau. The director will still remain a presidential appointee subject to Senate confirmation. As to qualifications, the bill states that the director shall "have a demonstrated ability in managing large organizations and experience in the collection, analysis, and use of statistical data."

Most significantly, the Director shall have a term of office of five years. The bill language says that the current term would begin on January 1, 2012. Any Director could only serve two five-year terms. With Robert Groves leaving the Bureau during the first week August," any individual appointed to fill a vacancy in such a position...shall be appointed for the remainder of the term." The President may remove the Director, but must communicate in writing to both Houses of Congress the reasons for such an action.

Finally, the bill establishes a Working Group on Streamlining Paperwork for Executive Nominations. This panel is to report on how to reduce the burden on nominees, who must fill out a large number of forms. In addition, the Working Group is charged with devising a way to create and implement an electronic system for collecting and distributing potential and actual nominees' background information.

Senate Panel Holds Hearing on the Impact of Pending Sequestration on Education

On July 25, the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, chaired by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), a hearing on: "The Impact of Sequestration on Education." A provision in the Budget Control Act of 2011, sequestration, absent any future congressional action, would occur on January 1, 2013 resulting in severe spending reductions across most government programs.

In his opening remarks, Harkin countered the current concern about sequestration's impact on defense budgets, and stated that sequestration will have an impact on a whole array of programs, and for that reason it's important we have an accurate account of its effect on non-defense budgets. Ranking Member Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL) concurred that sequestration will cause considerable impact and will affect all aspects of our society.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has estimated that sequestration would require a 7.8 percent reduction in funding for non-defense programs, which would reduce funding for the Education Department by about $4 billion. Harkin, in a report he released, suggested that the cut could climb to 17.6 percent if the Department of Defense budget is exempt. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) declared: "I cannot believe we think we can build a stronger America by cutting education that is counterintuitive to everything we stand for."

According to Harkin's report, States and local communities would lose $2.7 billion in Federal funding for three critical education programs: Title I, special education state grants, and Head Start. These programs serve a combined 30.7 million children, and would force 46,349 employees to either lose their jobs or rely on already over-burdened state and local budgets to pick up their salaries. Sequestration would force a $1.1 billion cut from Title I that would affect 4,000 schools as well as 1.8 million disadvantaged students and 15,000 teachers and teachers' aides, and 100,000 low income students would lose Head Start. The reduction in funding would also eliminate Federal support for about 11,000 special education teachers, aides, and other staff providing essential
However, if sequestration were triggered, federal dollars for low-income school districts, students with disabilities, teacher preparation programs and vocational education would continue to flow for the current school year, and would not hit classrooms until a year later.

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan testified that sequestration would send a signal that the U.S. is backtracking and would put at risk all that has been achieved through educational reform efforts. He said the long-term impact of sequestration would jeopardize our Nation's ability to compete in the global economy by hampering our ability to create and support an educated, skilled workforce. “Education is the cornerstone of our economy and a strong education system and strong economy are linked,” Duncan declared.

The Secretary also testified "that at a time when we are just starting to see signs of renewed economic growth, as well as the positive impact of historic education reforms, it just makes no sense at all to undermine this progress. If we have devastating cuts to education we are cutting off our nose to spite our face."

**Coalition Supports Balanced Approach to Deficit Reduction**


**House Panel Examines Alternative Teacher Certification Programs**

On July 24, the House Education and Workforce Committee's Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee chaired by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), held a hearing on "Education Reforms: Discussing the Value of Alternative Teacher Certification Programs."

The number of educators who obtain their certification through alternate routes has increased significantly over the last decade. According to the National Center for Policy Analysis, the number of alternative certifications issued nationwide rose from 4,000 in 1996 to 60,000 in 2006. Currently, approximately one third of all new teachers hired annually obtain their certification through alternate routes. Many schools have turned to these alternatively certified teachers to help fill shortages in particular geographic areas, subject areas, and classrooms with special needs students.

Hunter argued that unless the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements of No Child Left Behind are repealed, schools would be prevented from hiring teachers certified through alternative pathways. Hunter said the HQT provision is outdated requiring schools to focus on a teacher's credentials and tenure, rather than on a teacher's ability to keep students engaged and motivated, and to increase their achievements. “Rigorous studies have consistently shown alternatively certified teachers are equally as effective, if not more so, than traditionally certified educators," Hunter argued.

Ranking Subcommittee Member Rep. Dale Kildee (D-MI) believes that alternative certification programs are important and could provide one option to increase the supply of teachers in high-needs subject areas and high-need schools. Cynthia Brown, Vice President for Education Policy at the Center for American Progress, concurred that the current supply of teachers from traditional schools is not meeting demand, especially in subject areas like math, science, and special education, and in hard-to-staff urban and rural schools.

Jennifer Mulhern, Vice President for New Teacher Effectiveness at TNTP (The New Teacher Project), an alternative certification program, talked about how programs like hers are filling the
gaps. She noted that since 2005 in NYC alone TNTP has placed 9,000 teaching fellows that make up 20 percent of the math, science, and special education teachers.

Members showed some concern about who would decide who is a HQT if they repeal the provision. Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), a former community college president, asked the panelists if they think most schools are equipped to make decisions about what teachers are qualified to enter the classroom. Seth Andrew, the Founder and Superintendent of Democracy Prep Public Schools, replied that principals are qualified to make these decisions and need the authority to find the teachers that are right for their school, their students and their environment, and that is not necessarily the federal definition of HQT. He asserted further that: “We need policymakers to relinquish the responsibility for hiring teachers for schools to decide who is highly qualified. Regardless of the whether they came from a traditional program or an alternative certification program or in some cases are uncertified, we need to find more quality people to enter the profession and we need to be agnostic about how they got there.”

Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI) argued that credentials in and of itself are not the answer. Rather, he concluded, we need to focus more on outcomes to create a more dynamic system.

**NIH Creates Office of Emergency Care Research**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently announced the creation of the NIH Office of emergency Care Research (OECR) to coordinate and foster basic, clinical, and translational research and research training for the emergency setting. The ultimate goal is to improve the outcome of patients who require emergency treatment.

OECR is the culmination of more than five years of discussions between the agency and the emergency medicine community. It will be housed in the National Institutes of General Medical Science (NIGMS). A search is underway for a permanent director. Meanwhile OECR will be led on an acting basis by Walter J. Koroshetz, deputy director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS).

OECR will not fund grants; however, it will foster innovation and improvement in emergency care and in the training of future researchers in this field by:

- Coordinating funding opportunities that involve multiple NIH institutes and centers.
- Working closely with the NIH Emergency Care Research Working Group, which includes representatives from most NIH Institutes and Centers.
- Organizing scientific meetings to identify new research and training opportunities in the emergency setting.
- Catalyzing the development of new funding opportunities.
- Informing investigators about funding opportunities in their areas of interest.
- Fostering career development for trainees in emergency care research.
- Representing NIH in government-wide efforts to improve the nation’s emergency care system.

Additional information about the Office of Emergency Care Research is available at: [http://www.nigms.nih.gov/About/Overview/OECR/](http://www.nigms.nih.gov/About/Overview/OECR/).

**The NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Releases Video**

On July 31st, OBSSR released a brief video about the Office and its mission.
Peace Institute Names Former Congressman Next President

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) has named former U.S. Representative Jim Marshall as its fourth president. He succeeds Ambassador Richard H. Solomon, who has led the Institute for the last 19 years.

Marshall, who will take office on September 14, represented Georgia’s 8th Congressional district centered around Macon from 2003 to 2011. Marshall was a Blue Dog conservative Democrat in a district made considerably more difficult for him by the Republican-controlled State Legislature in 2005. Marshall survived two more elections, but he was finally defeated by current Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA) in 2010, another example of the decline of the Blue Dogs in the South.

During his tenure in the House he served on the Armed Services, Agriculture, and Financial Services Committees. A decorated Vietnam Veteran, Marshall also served as chairman of the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, while in Congress. In 2006, Marshall was inducted into the U.S. Army Ranger Hall of Fame.

Before his election to Congress, Marshall had served as Mayor of Macon. He also was professor at Mercer University’s Walter F. George School of Law. Since leaving Congress, he has been a visiting professor at Princeton University.

Marshall has a Bachelor’s Degree from Princeton and a J.D. from Boston University.

At the urging of former Senators Jennings Randolph (D-WV) and Spark Matsunaga (D-HA), Congress created the USIP in 1984 as an independent federal agency. The Institute now trains, educates, and implements programs that help manage conflict through nonviolent means and that create structures to maintain peace in post-conflict situations. President Solomon oversaw the expansion of USIP from a small educational and analytical organization into an operational agency with offices in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Baghdad, Iraq, as well as a presence in Pakistan and Libya.

For more information on the USIP go to: www.usip.org.

New Coalition on Agriculture Research Holds Webinar

On July 25, Supporters of Agricultural Research (SOAR) held a webcast focusing on current issues facing agricultural research. The hour and a half event marked the official launch of SOAR and included time for pre-planned segments and viewer questions. SOAR is a new organization working to build a coalition of farm and consumer groups, universities, and scientific organizations that will encourage federal science policy to generate the agriculture innovations America and the world urgently need. SOAR’s goal is to substantially increase federal support for investigator-initiated
agriculture research grants in such a manner that it enlarges the group of scientists involved in this work.

Participating in the Webinar were: William Danforth, Chancellor Emeritus of Washington University and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center; Donald Kennedy, President Emeritus of Stanford University and former Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, and the former editor-in-chief of SCIENCE Magazine; Roger Beachy, former Chief Scientist at USDA and the first director of the agency’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture; and Carol Tucker Foreman, Distinguished Fellow at the Consumer Federation of America’s Food Policy Institute and a nationally known expert on food safety.

Panelists indicated that throughout their careers they felt that agricultural science was “missing something.” This absent factor they suggested was how to tap into innovative thinking of American scientists, similar to the system of individual investigator competitive grants at the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Kennedy noted that the traditional agricultural research community was initially hesitant to borrow this competitive method from the health sciences, but that there is a current effort to refresh the clock and utilize a competitive peer review for agricultural research. Tucker-Foreman proudly declared that we have led the world in agriculture production, but added that lack of communication among researchers is a huge problem. The only way to organize this effort, according to Tucker-Foreman, is with federal government support for research.

In response to a question, Danforth acknowledged that challenges are escalating, but affirmed that so too is science’s ability to meet them. American agriculture has always depended on innovation, he declared. Danforth underlined the need to see the best proposals, judge them, and pick the best of the best. Tucker-Foreman expressed concern that at times the research enterprise seemed to address only the needs of producers. She was delighted to examine Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) grants and see some that directly addressed this concern.

Several of the panelists also spoke out against ethanol as an alternative fuel source during the event. Kennedy proclaimed that the “experiment of using ethanol as fuel has not been a distinguished success at all.” Cars competing with people for food is a “troublesome situation,” argued Kennedy. Danforth also noted that this was an issue and announced that people at the Plant Science Center are working at developing fuel crops that grow early in season before corn and soy beans need to start in order to allow for effective rotation with food crops.

For more information about this event, including the full recording, please visit the SOAR website here.

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute Seeks Input on Draft Methodology Report

PCORI, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, is seeking comments on its draft Methodology Report. PCORI is an independent, non-profit organization authorized by Congress. Its mission is to fund research that will provide patients, their caregivers and clinicians with the evidence-based information needed to make better-informed health care decisions.

The draft Methodology report proposes standards for the conduct of patient-centered outcomes research (PCOR). Comments will be accepted until 11:59 pm ET Friday, September 14. The comments will be analyzed for potential incorporation into a revised version of the report that the PCORI Board of Governors will consider for adoption at its November 2012 public meeting in Boston.

The report identifies 60 standards for PCOR and is a critical step in guiding health care stakeholders towards the best and most appropriate methods for conducting this research.
The Institute will accept reactions to the draft report through an online comment and survey tool where respondents may answer a series of general and specific questions about the report. In addition, respondents may upload a document to provide any additional comments. All responses received through www.pcori.org will be displayed for public view on the website, as required by law.

The Committee will review the comments received and revise the draft so that it reflects the perspectives of the full health care community. The Institute will submit the revised report to PCORI’s Board of Governors for consideration and approval.

According to PCORI, as the new methods are implemented and verified, revisions and improvements to the report will continue, with the ongoing help of all health care stakeholders, to ensure it remains the foundation for credible patient-centered outcomes research that can inform decision-making.

COSSA Joins Efforts to Oppose Elimination of AHRQ

On July 30, 2012, COSSA joined with 139 organizations representing patients, health professionals, hospitals, scientists, patients, employers, and insurers to “strongly oppose the FY 2013 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill as reported by the subcommittee on July 18.” The letter expresses the organizations “grave” concerns regarding the “assault on science and research, particularly the elimination of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality [AHRQ].”

The letter goes on to state: “To ‘terminate’ AHRQ in the current fiscal environment is pennywise and pound foolish. Our nation spends more than $2.6 trillion annually on health care – the largest share of which are federal purchases through Medicare, Medicaid, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan, TRICARE, and veterans’ health care. Americans deserve reliable information on how to deliver the best possible care, at the greatest value, with the best outcomes. AHRQ-funded health services research provides those answers.”

AERA Accepting Proposals for Dissertation and Research Grants

The American Educational Research Association (AERA) is accepting proposals for its Dissertation Grants and Research Grants programs. The deadline to apply is September 19, 2012.

The programs provide small grants and training for researchers who conduct studies of education policies and practice using quantitative methods. AERA’s dissertation grants are designed to support advanced doctoral students to undertake dissertations using data from the large-scale national or international data sets supported by NCES, NSF, and other federal agencies.

Similarly, the Association’s research grants are designed for faculty members, postdoctoral researchers, and other doctoral-level scholars to carry out quantitative research from large-scale national or international data sets supported by NCES, NSF, along with other federal agencies. Applications for both programs are encouraged from a variety of disciplines, including, but not limited to, education, sociology, economics, psychology, demography, statistics, and psychometrics.

For more information, see www.aera.net/grantsprogram and/or contact George Wimberly at grantsprogram@aera.net or 202/238-3200.

NSF SBE Directorate Solicits Applications for Postdoctoral Fellowships

The National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate has announced a solicitation to award fellowships to post-doctoral students. Applications are due on October 29, 2012.
According to NSF, the goal of the SBE Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (SPRF) program is to enhance the participation of under-represented groups in science and engineering; promote interdisciplinary research; and encourage doctoral-level scientists (who are not yet in full-time positions) to take advantage of the two-year fellowships to prepare for scientific careers in academia, industry, and government.

This SPRF program offers two tracks of Fellowships. For both of these tracks, SBE encourages proposals from a wide range of doctoral-level investigators including those from groups that remain under-represented in their field. Some proposals may contain elements of both tracks; for example, an interdisciplinary proposal may focus on the science of broadening participation. In these cases, the Fellow would have to choose one dominant track.

The Fellow must affiliate with a host institution during the entire tenure of the fellowship, and the Fellowship proposal must be submitted through this institution. The SPRF is a supervised research award, and each Fellow must have at least one Sponsoring Scientist, who is a faculty member at the submitting organization.

SBE Postdoctoral Research Fellowship candidates must: be a U.S. citizen, national, or legally admitted permanent resident alien of the U.S.; have obtained a Ph.D. degree within 24 months before the SPRF application deadline, or will obtain the Ph.D. degree within 10 months after the SPRF deadline; and not hold a full-time tenure tract faculty position.

SBE expects to make up to 15 total fellowship awards contingent upon the quality of the applications and availability of funds. The fellowships pay an annual salary of $45,000 plus $10,000 for research and travel expenses.

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to: Fahmida N. Chowdhury, (703) 292-4672 or fchowdhu@nsf.gov; or Christina M. Jones, (703) 292-2960 or chjones@nsf.gov.


### NSF Offers International Research Experiences for Students

The National Science Foundation (NSF) seeks applications for its International Research Experiences for Students (IRES) program. The IRES program supports active research participation by students enrolled as undergraduates or graduate students in any area of research funded by the NSF. **The deadline is August 21, 2012.**

NSF accepts IRES proposals from U.S.-based academic research institutions, professional societies, or consortia. However, foreign researchers provide the primary research mentorship, but the U.S.-based Principal Investigator (PI) recruits and prepares the U.S. student participants.

According to NSF, an IRES project often enables students to work within an established collaboration between a U.S.-based research group and a foreign collaborating research group. However, U.S.-based PIs may also propose projects that include new foreign collaborations.

IRES proposals must have a unifying research theme that enables a "cohort" experience for participating students. The IRES cohort concept requires that within each IRES project, each participating student must have an individual research project for which he/she is responsible, but these individual projects must also be coordinated to address a unifying research theme. NSF support for these projects runs for three years that will involve support for three separate student cohorts during that time.

NSF anticipates making approximately 12 IRES awards FY 2013, pending quality of proposals and
availability of the $2.25 million the agency expects to spend on the program.


For more information about the current solicitation contact: Maija M. Kukla at 703-292-8710 or email OISE-IRES@nsf.gov.


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**NEA Seeks Applications for Research on Measures of Arts Participation**

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has increasingly aimed to explore the factors and conditions affecting participation and art-making, as well as illuminate the impact of the arts on American lives and communities. The agency’s strategic plan accordingly identifies research as a “mission-critical goal - specifically, to promote public knowledge and understanding about the contribution of the arts.” NEA intends to expand opportunities for rigorous research that investigates the value of the U.S. arts ecosystem and the impact of the arts on other domains of American life.

The NEA’s Office of Research & Analysis (ORA) has identified priorities in support of the overarching research goal:

1. Identifying and cultivating new and existing data source in the arts.
2. Investigating the value of the U.S. arts ecosystem and the impact of the arts on other domains of American life.
3. Elevating the public profile of arts-related research.

Accordingly, the agency is seeking applications that present novel research questions and/or techniques that will yield valuable information about the utility to arts-related research of various kinds of data. The NEA also will consider strong research proposals measuring the effects of arts participation on broader-level outcomes, such as new forms of self-expression, new outlets for creative activity, and the overall creative and expressive capacity of U.S. society. By doing so, these projects will enhance current knowledge about the characteristics and/or contributions of the arts in the U.S. and how ultimately the benefits of the arts lead directly into societal capacities to innovate and express new ideas.

NEA hopes that by providing financial support to deserving projects, the program will spur growth in the number of people experienced in and knowledgeable about arts-related research in the U.S. The agency recognizes that some of the “most compelling research has originated in non-arts specialties: cognitive neuroscience, labor-economics, urban planning fieldworks, and psychological studies.” It is encouraging applications from other diverse fields (e.g., sociology, economics, anthropology) and diverse areas of expertise, including, but not limited to, health, education, and urban and regional planning.

Support will be given for the analysis of high-quality datasets, but not for the collection of primary data. Projects using commercial or administrative data, and/or projects involving partnerships with for-profit entities, are likewise encouraged to apply.

NEA anticipates awarding up to 25 grants, based on availability of funding. The grants will generally range from $10,000 to $30,000. Indirect costs will be supported, but limited to a maximum of 15 percent of the total award. Support may start on May 1, 2013 or anytime thereafter. The grant period is not expected to exceed one year.
New COSSA Member

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy at the University of New Mexico is COSSA's newest member. The purpose of the Center is to increase the diversity of those with formal training in the fields of economics, political science and sociology who engage in health services and health policy research. The Center seeks to become a nationally recognized locus for health policy research that will support work to inform health policy debates at multiple levels. We welcome the Center to COSSA and look forward to future collaborations on areas of mutual interest.

Editor's Note: UPDATE on Summer Hiatus

With Congress on recess until September 10, COSSA Washington Update will also go on its summer hiatus. We will return on September 10 as well. Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Consortium of Social Science Associations

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University of Minnesota
Mississippi State University
University of Nebraska, Lincoln
New York University
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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