



# COSSA

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### **In This Issue**

#### **FEATURED ARTICLE**

[President Releases Preliminary Details of FY 2015 Budget Request](#)

#### **CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS**

[House Science Committee Leaders Introduce Competing NSF Authorization Bills](#)

#### **FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS**

[NSTC's Neuroscience Working Group Releases Priorities for Accelerating Neuroscience Research](#)

[NSF Releases S&E Indicators 2014 State Data Tool](#)

[OBSSR Conference Held on Complex Systems, Health Disparities & Population Health: Building Bridges](#)

[NCHS Finds Significant Drop in Obesity Rate for Young Children](#)

[AHRQ Data Demonstrates Regional Variation in Emergency Room Use](#)

#### **COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES**

[Save the Date: Congressional Briefing on the Connection between Criminology, Research and Public Policy - March 24](#)

#### **COSSA ACTION & OUTREACH**

[Advocates Urge Adequate Funding for BLS](#)

### **FEATURED ARTICLE**

## President Releases Preliminary Details of FY 2015 Budget Request

On March 4, President Obama released preliminary details of his fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request to Congress. The proposal totals \$3.901 trillion, including \$1.014 trillion in discretionary spending, which keeps the caps set in the budget agreement brokered by Congress at the end of 2013. Total federal R&D funding would reach \$135.4 billion in FY 2015, \$1.7 billion more than FY 2014, and would include \$65.9 billion for non-defense R&D, an increase of \$477 million.

The budget also includes a proposal for an additional \$56 billion in discretionary spending, split between defense and non-defense discretionary programs, to be paid for with spending cuts and revenue created by closing tax breaks, according to the White House. If funded, this new "Opportunity, Growth and Security Initiative" would provide \$5.3 billion in additional R&D funding to agencies such as the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and other agencies. This funding is intended to supplement the President's requested levels. However, House and Senate appropriations committee chairs have already indicated that they plan to write their bills according to the budget caps set last year, signaling that the President is unlikely to receive the additional \$56 billion as part of his initiative.

The release of the President's budget request marks the official start of the FY 2015 appropriations process. Accordingly, House and Senate appropriations and authorizing committees have begun their oversight hearings, and appropriations chairs have set an ambitious timeline, with committee markups occurring as early as May and floor consideration over the summer. In addition, Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray (D-WA) indicated last week that her committee will not prepare a budget resolution this year given the budget agreement produced last year that sets discretionary spending caps for FY 2015. However, she has expressed interest in working with House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-WI) to revisit the caps to address the priorities outlined in the President's initiative. Chairman Ryan has focused his attention recently on critiquing federal entitlement programs and calling for a rewrite of federal anti-poverty programs.

Many of the agency- and program-specific details are being reserved until agencies hold their respective budget briefings over the next few weeks. COSSA will provide a full analysis of the President's FY 2015 budget request for federal agencies and programs of interest to the social and behavioral sciences community in our special budget issue in the coming weeks. In the meantime, check out COSSA's agency-by-agency [preliminary analysis](#).

## CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS

### House Science Committee Leaders Introduce Competing NSF Reauthorization Bills

Later this week, the House Science, Space and Technology Subcommittee on Research and Technology will consider legislation to reauthorize the National Science Foundation (NSF), called the *Frontiers in Research, Science and Technology Act* (H.R. 4186), or [FIRST Act](#). The bill would serve as a two-year authorization for NSF, running through fiscal year (FY) 2015. In addition to authorizing overall funding levels for NSF in FY 2014 and FY 2015 (note: FY 2014 has already been appropriated), the legislation breaks from regular practice and would provide authorizations of appropriation for NSF's individual research directorates. Of particular concern to the social and behavioral science community, the FIRST Act would authorize FY 2014 and 2015 funding levels for the Social, Behavioral and Economic (SBE) sciences directorate at \$150 million, which is nearly 42 percent below SBE's current funding level. The top-line authorization of appropriations for NSF in FY 2015 would be \$7.279 billion under the FIRST Act, or a little more than one percent over the current level. In addition, the bill would place additional burden on NSF regarding its already-gold standard merit review process and require additional, potentially duplicative public disclosure of research grants. Further, the bill seeks to micromanage the grant application process and limit the

number of awards that can be made to principal investigators, thereby undermining the merit review process that successfully determines the very best science worth taxpayer support. COSSA strongly objects to the FIRST Act in its current form.

On March 6, Science Committee Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) introduced the [America COMPETES Act of 2014](#), the committee Democrats' alternative to the FIRST Act. In contrast to the Republican bill, the Democrats' bill seeks to maintain the current funding structure of NSF by authorizing a top-line appropriation for NSF and its research account without authorizing the individual directorates. The bill would authorize NSF for five years, through FY 2019, with the budget growing by 5 percent each year. Further, in a nod to efforts on the other side to target individual areas of science (i.e. social science), the Democrats' bill includes a "Sense of Congress" statement on support for all scientific fields (Sec. 302):

*"It is the sense of Congress that in order to achieve its mission 'to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national defense...' the National Science Foundation must continue to support unfettered, competitive, merit reviewed basic research across all fields of science and engineering, including the social and behavioral sciences.*

Despite objection by many in the scientific community to the FIRST Act, the bill is expected to pass through the Research and Technology Subcommittee on Thursday, likely along party lines. Rep. Johnson could offer her bill as a substitute during the subcommittee or full committee markup, though her efforts are not likely to succeed.

## FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS

### **NSTC's Neuroscience Working Group Releases *Priorities for Accelerating Neuroscience Research***

The National Science and Technology Council's (NSTC) Committee on Science Interagency Working Group on Neuroscience (IWGN) recently released [Priorities for Accelerating Neuroscience Research Through Enhanced Communication, Coordination, and Collaboration](#), a report designed to address the need for a "broad and comprehensive approach to basic and applied neuroscience research, thereby improving scientists' understanding of how animals and humans respond and adapt to changing environmental conditions." The report highlights the *Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies* (BRAIN) initiative, announced by President Obama in April 2013 that is intended to accelerate the development of cutting-edge technologies to transform the understanding of the brain and its function.

The report includes several recommendations related to social and behavioral science. Read COSSA's full analysis [here](#).

### **NSF Releases S&E Indicators 2014 State Data Tool**

As previously [reported](#), the National Science Board (NSB) released the 2014 edition of [Science and Engineering Indicators](#) on February 6. This Congressionally-mandated biennial report serves as a "factual and policy-neutral source of high-quality U.S. and international data" on the state of the U.S science and engineering enterprise. As part of the S&E Indicators, the National Science Foundation recently posted the S&E Indicators [State Data Tool](#) as a supplement to chapter 8 of the Indicators report. The State Data tool allows you to compare states on science and engineering measures, such as STEM degrees awarded, the scientific workforce, and state economic impacts of science and engineering, among others.

### **OBSSR Conference Held on Complex Systems, Health Disparities &**

## Population Health: Building Bridges

On February 24-25, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) held a two-day national [meeting](#) of the Network on Inequality, Complexity and Health (NICH). NICH is housed at the University of Michigan and brings together nineteen scholars from a broad set of disciplines to explore the use of Complex Systems modeling techniques in advancing the understanding of how to improve population health and eliminate health disparities. Accordingly, the NIH meeting was designed to address bridging the application of system sciences methodologies to population health and health disparities. According to OBSSR's Stephane Philogene, project officer for NICH, meeting participants included individuals from 20 countries as well as 39 states within the U.S.

The level of interest, Philogene pointed out in his welcoming remarks, "bodes well for the utility and growing application of systems science methodologies to policy resistant health challenges, but more specifically for application of these tools and methods to population health and health disparities research."

Read COSSA's full summary [here](#).

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## NCHS Finds Significant Drop in Obesity Rate for Young Children

New data from the National Center for Health Statistics' (NCHS) National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) shows that the obesity rate for children aged two to five years dropped by 43 percent between 2003-2004 and 2011-2012 (declining from 14 percent to 8 percent). For the larger population, the obesity rate has not changed between 2003-2004 and 2011-2012. In 2011-2012, 68.5 percent of adults were either overweight or obese. The findings were [reported in JAMA](#), the Journal of the American Medical Association.

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## AHRQ Data Demonstrates Regional Variation in Emergency Room Use

A [recent story](#) in *The Atlantic* utilized data published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) to assess regional variations in emergency room visits. The article notes that the most frequent ailments are common across all regions, but that less common complaints see more regional variation (e.g., frostbite in cold climates, water-related injuries in coastal areas).

## COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES

### Save the Date: Congressional Briefing on Understanding the Connection between Criminology, Research and Public Policy - March 24

COSSA is pleased to co-sponsor a Congressional briefing on Monday, March 24 with the American Society of Criminology (ASC) titled, "Understanding the Connection: Criminology, Research and Public Policy. ASC is a COSSA Governing Member. The briefing will feature authors who contributed to a special issue of ASC's prominent journal, *Criminology and Public Policy*, who will discuss ways research in criminology can positively impact policy development. The event will take place from 12:00 to 1:30 in the Rayburn House Office Building. Additional details, including how to RSVP, can be found in the briefing [invitation](#).

## COSSA ACTION & OUTREACH

### Advocates Urge Adequate Funding for BLS

On March 4, COSSA joined the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS)

and other statistical and economic research organizations on a [letter](#) to House and Senate appropriators urging their support for sufficient funding for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in fiscal year (FY) 2015. The letter further draws attention to recent announcements by BLS detailing programs and surveys that are planned to be discontinued, including the export price indexing program.

## Consortium of Social Science Associations Members

### Governing Members

American Anthropological Association  
American Association for Public Opinion Research  
American Economic Association  
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American Political Science Association  
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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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