



WASHINGTON UPDATE

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COSSA Joins Societies in Requesting Changes to NIH Clinical Trial Policy

In a [letter](#) sent to National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis Collins on October 27, COSSA and 21 other scientific societies and associations requested that NIH revisit a new policy that alters the definition of "clinical trials" funded by the agency and institutes new reporting requirements for such research (see [COSSA's coverage](#) of this issue). While the letter is supportive of the goal of enhancing transparency of NIH-funded research, including introducing registration and reporting requirements, the signatories express concern that "basic science research is being redefined as a clinical trial at NIH and that "basic science investigators will be unnecessarily burdened with requirements relating to conducting clinical trials that have

nothing to do with their own research." The organizations hope to work with NIH leadership to find a solution that addresses the concerns of the basic science community while still improving transparency for true clinical trial research.

CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

Rand Paul Introduces Bill to "Reform" Federal Research Grant System

On October 18, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), Chair of the Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hosted a hearing entitled "[Broken Beakers: Federal Support for Research](#)." Following the hearing Sen. Paul introduced the [BASIC Research Act](#) (S. 1973) to "reform" the federal research grant system. The bill would alter how grant proposals at all federal research funding agencies are reviewed by adding non-expert members of the public to review panels and requiring all applications for federal research grants to be made public. The bill also proposes the elimination of the Inspector General of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to create an Inspector General that would oversee the entire federal research enterprise.

The controversial legislation, which was summarized in [Science](#) magazine, has been referred to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee but currently has no cosponsors and an incredibly narrow path to passage. COSSA is watching the legislation and will report if or when action is needed.

Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee Holds Hearing on Indirect Costs of Research

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education [held a hearing](#) on October 24 on the role of facilities and administrative costs (also known as indirect costs) in supporting NIH-funded research. The hearing included testimony from Dr. Kelvin Droegemeier, Vice President of Research at the University of Oklahoma; Dr. Gary Gilliland, President of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center; Dr. Bruce Liang, Dean of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine; and Dr. Keith Yamamoto, Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Strategy at the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Droegemeier's [written testimony](#) included a history of the collaboration between universities and the federal government to support research, trends in facilities and administrative costs over time, and thorough explanation of the importance of federal support for these costs.

Committee leadership, including Chair Tom Cole (R-OK) and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), and witnesses agreed that facilities and administrative costs were key to supporting research and should not be arbitrarily restricted. Many committee members agreed with the witnesses that restricting facilities and administrative costs would have a strong negative impact on all research done at universities and that capping the rates at which universities can be reimbursed for these costs should not be used as a budget-cutting measure by Congress or the Administration.

Find more of COSSA's coverage of facilities and administrative costs [here](#).

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS

William Beach, Former Budget Committee Economist, Nominated as BLS Commissioner

The White House has [nominated](#) William Beach for a four-year term as Commissioner of the

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), succeeding Erica Groshen, whose term expired in January, and William J. Wiatrowski, the Acting Commissioner since Groshen's departure. Currently Vice President for Policy Research at George Mason University's Mercatus Center, Beach holds a Ph.D. in economics from the UK's Buckingham University. Prior to joining the Mercatus Center, Beach served as the Chief Economist for the Senate Budget Committee's Republican staff and the Lazof Family Fellow in Economics director of the Center for Data Analysis at the Heritage Foundation. BLS Commissioners must be confirmed by the Senate, and no date for a confirmation hearing has been announced at this time.

GAO to Study Potential Federal Interference in Science

According to the *Washington Post*, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) [will undertake a study](#) of federal agencies' scientific integrity policies and potential federal interference in the scientific process at the request of Sen. Bill Nelson (D-FL). Nelson, the Ranking Member on the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, made the request in a [letter](#) dated September 25, 2017. Citing concerns stemming from reports of possible interference in the scientific process at the Environmental Protection Agency, changes to agencies' public information related to climate change, and the cancellation of a study that might be damaging to the fossil fuel industry, Nelson asked the GAO to assess whether "the administration has violated scientific integrity policies by suppressing federally funded science, interfering with research grant activities, interfering in typical scientific processes, or restricting the freedom of federal scientists to communicate findings with the public." While GAO agreed to Nelson's request, it does not expect to begin work on the study for about four months, due to limited resources. The [American Institute of Physics](#) has published a more in-depth look at some of the context surrounding Nelson's request.

NSF's Statistical Division Seeks Director

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is accepting applications for the position of Division Director of the [National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics](#) (NCSES), NSF's principal statistical agency housed within the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE). The NCSES Division Director "assesses needs and trends involving the national surveys, implements overall strategic planning and policy setting for the Division, provides leadership and guidance to Division staff members, determines funding requirements, prepares and justifies budget estimates, balances program needs, allocates resources, oversees the evaluation of proposals and recommendations for awards and declinations, and represents NSF to relevant external groups." More information is available in the [posting on USAjobs](#). Applications must be submitted by December 4, 2017.

GAO Report on Firearm Storage Highlights Lack of Federal Funding for Gun Research

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report entitled [Personal Firearms: Programs that Promote Safe Storage and Research on Their Effectiveness](#) that compiles information on public and non-profit programs promoting safe storage of personal firearms and the results of research on the effectiveness of such programs. The report was produced at the request of 19 Democratic senators, including Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA), the Ranking Member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP). The report finds that "there is relatively little research on safe firearm storage," and that "lack of funding and data" is often cited as a primary reason. According to the report, funding shortages and instability has limited the research on firearm safety and storage that could have been conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

The report cites an [analysis published in the Journal of the American Medical Association](#) that compared available funding and publication volume for research on various leading causes of

death and found that "research on firearms receives disproportionately low funding and has fewer publications compared to other top causes of death." The lack of funding can lead to shortage of expertise in the field. One researcher interviewed told the GAO that "he discourages new students from firearm research exclusively because they will not be able to make a living in that research area alone." Further, a shortage of high-quality data on firearms exacerbates the difficulty of conducting research in this area. The CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) has not included questions related to firearm safety since 2004. However, the CDC does plan to add a module on firearms in the 2017 survey, on the recommendation of the National Academy of Medicine.

PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

CNSTAT Issues Report on *Federal Statistics, Multiple Data Sources, and Privacy Protection*

The Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine recently issued a consensus report entitled [*Federal Statistics, Multiple Data Sources, and Privacy Protection: Next Steps*](#). The report was produced by the [Panel on Improving Federal Statistics for Policy and Social Science Research Using Multiple Data Sources and State-of-the-Art Estimation Methods](#), chaired by Robert Groves of Georgetown University. The Panel's first report, [Innovations in Federal Statistics: Combining Data Sources While Protecting Privacy](#), was published in January 2017, and described some of the challenges currently facing the federal statistical system's current paradigm of heavy reliance on sample surveys and recommended a new approach of combining different kinds of federal and private data, as well as the creation of an entity to facilitate that. *Federal Statistics, Multiple Data Sources, and Privacy Protection* builds on the first report and examines statistical methods for combining diverse types of data, the implications relying on multiple data sources may have for IT systems, different statistical and computer science approaches to enhancing privacy protections, how to ensure the quality and utility of statistics produced using multiple data sources, and ways to implement the "new entity" that would facilitate combining data sources. The pre-publication version of the report is available on the [National Academies' website](#).

There is quite a bit of overlap in the areas addressed by the CNSTAT panel and those addressed by the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking, which released its [report](#) in September (see [COSSA's coverage the Commission](#))-in fact, Panel Chair Robert Groves served on the Commission as well. However, while the resulting reports from the two groups are hopefully complementary, their work was conducted independent of one another.

NDD United Highlights Impacts of Budget Cuts in Faces of Austerity 2.0 Report

On October 25, [NDD United](#), a broad coalition of stakeholders interested in protecting non-defense discretionary (NDD) programs from budget cuts (including COSSA), held a congressional briefing to celebrate the launch of its latest report, [Faces of Austerity 2.0: How Budget Cuts Continue to Make Us Sicker, Poorer, and Less Secure](#). The report explores how sequestration and the [Budget Control Act](#) put programs that millions of Americans rely on at risk. NDD United is calling upon Congress to stop NDD funding cuts by treating defense and nondefense programs equally, maintaining the precedent set in the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013](#). NDD United aims to demonstrate that these budget cuts are not just numbers on paper, but represent real and increasingly difficult challenges for many Americans.

At the congressional briefing, NDD United invited a panel of five speakers to share their personal experiences with cuts to NDD programs. Melissa Armas, a mother and volunteer with Parent Voices CA, shared her story first. This past year, Melissa accepted a bonus from her employer, and because of it, she was \$100 over the low-income threshold to receive a

government subsidy that would allow her four-year-old daughter to attend daycare. Michael Gritton, Executive Director of KentuckianaWorks, an organization that educates, trains, and connects local job seekers with employers, shared that his organization has had to close two training centers and cut training programs by 40 percent because of NDD budget cuts. Joseph Hill-Coles, Community Navigator at Youth Services, Inc. used his personal experience as a homeless eighteen-year-old to amplify the need to fund "age and culturally appropriate" programs for homeless teens. Jim Northup, former Superintendent of Shenandoah National Park, spoke about the necessity of a sustained annual national budget that allows agencies and programs to plan their yearly spending effectively. The final speaker, Ashley Webb, Prevention Program Manager for the Illinois Association for Behavioral Health, explained how reliant state and local programs and organizations are on federal funding, especially in a state like Illinois where state funding is often unreliable. She echoed the voices of the other speakers when affirming that these programs should be able to spend "less time fundraising and more time working."

This article was contributed by COSSA's fall intern, Erin Buechele of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

COSSA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

John Holdren Wins 2018 Moynihan Prize

The [American Academy of Political and Social Science](#) (AAPSS), a COSSA Member, announced former White House Science Advisor John Holdren as the winner of the 2018 [Daniel Patrick Moynihan Prize](#). Holdren is a trained plasma physicist who served as President Obama's Science Advisor and Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and is currently the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. The Moynihan Prize was established in 2007 to "recognize social scientists, public officials, and civic leaders who champion the use of informed judgement to advance the public good." This is the first year a scientist outside the social sciences has been awarded the Moynihan Prize. Holdren will deliver a public lecture and formally receive his award at a ceremony in Washington, DC on May 17, 2018.

SRCD Accepting Application for Federal, State Policy Fellowships

The [Society for Research and Child Development](#) (SRCD), a COSSA governing member, is accepting applications for its Federal and State Policy Fellowships for the 2018-2019 academic year. SRCD sponsors both Congressional and Executive Branch Fellowships through the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellowship program. Applications for the [federal fellowships](#) are due by December 15, 2017. SRCD also offers two state policy fellowships: a Post-Doctoral State Policy Fellowship in Early Childhood and a Pre-Doctoral State Policy Fellowship in Early Learning. Letters of intent for the [state fellowships](#) are due December 22, 2017.

EVENTS CALENDAR

- [Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences Annual Meeting](#), November 1-4, 2017, Denver, CO
- [Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Research Conference](#), November 2-4, 2017, Chicago, IL
- [Social Science History Association Annual Meeting](#), November 2-5, Montreal, Canada
- [Evaluation 2017](#) (American Evaluation Association), November 6-11, 2017, Washington, DC
- [North American Regional Science Council Annual Meeting](#), November 8-12, 2017, Vancouver, Canada
- [History of Science Society Annual Meeting](#), November 9-12, Toronto, Canada

- [American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting](#), November 15-18, 2017, Philadelphia, PA
- [National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference](#), November 15-18, 2017, Orlando, FL
- [National Communication Association Annual Convention](#), November 16-19, 2017, Dallas, TX
- [Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Convention](#), November 16-19, 2017, San Diego, CA
- [African Studies Association Annual Meeting](#), November 16-19, 2017, Chicago, IL
- [American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting](#), November 29-December 3, 2017, Washington, DC
- [Annual NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Research Festival](#), December 8, 2017, Bethesda, MD

A list of COSSA members' annual meetings and other events can be found on the COSSA [events page](#). COSSA members who have an upcoming event they would like to see listed in the Events Calendar and on our website should send an email to jmilton@coffa.org.

Consortium of Social Science Associations Members

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 American Association for Public Opinion Research
 American Economic Association
 American Educational Research Association
 American Political Science Association
 American Psychological Association
 American Society of Criminology
 American Sociological Association
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 Midwest Sociological Society
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North American Regional Science Council
Rural Sociological Society
Social Science History Association
Society for Prevention Research
Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for Social Work and Research
Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues
Society of Behavioral Medicine
Southern Political Science Association
Southern Sociological Society
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Social Science Research Council

COSSA

Executive Director: Wendy A. Naus

Assistant Director for Public Affairs: Julia Milton

Government Relations Associate: Camille Hosman

newsletter@coffa.org

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to promote sustainable federal funding for and widespread use of social and behavioral science research and federal policies that positively impact the conduct of research. COSSA serves as a united voice for a broad, diverse network of organizations, institutions, communities, and stakeholders who care about a successful and vibrant social science research enterprise. The COSSA membership includes professional and disciplinary associations, scientific societies, research centers and institutes, and U.S. colleges and universities.

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