



CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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Testimony in Support of Fiscal Year 2019 Funding for the  
National Science Foundation, Census Bureau, National Institute of Justice,  
and Bureau of Justice Statistics

Prepared for the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate  
Submitted by Wendy A. Naus, Executive Director  
Consortium of Social Science Associations  
May 24, 2018

On behalf of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), I offer this written testimony for inclusion in the official committee record. For fiscal year (FY) 2019, COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate **\$8.45 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), \$4.735 billion for the Census Bureau, \$42 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and \$48 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).**

First, I wish to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding support for federal science agencies. Despite tough, ongoing fiscal challenges, the Subcommittee has continued to maintain funding for basic research as a top priority. Thank you.

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. We represent the collective interests of all STEM disciplines engaged in the rigorous study of why and how humans behave as they do as individuals, groups and within institutions, organizations, and society. *Social and behavioral science* often refers to the disciplines of and fields within anthropology, communication, demography, economics, geography, history, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, and statistics, as well as countless multidisciplinary subfields.

Social and behavioral science research is supported across the federal government, including at the National Science Foundation and the Department of Justice. Further, federal statistics collected by the Census Bureau and other federal statistical agencies provide important data needed to conduct social science research that informs policy decisions. Taken together, federal social and behavioral science and statistical data help to provide us with answers to complex, human-centered questions such as:

- How to convince a community in a path of a tornado to heed warnings;
- Ways to slow and hopefully eradicate the opioid epidemic; and
- How to support counter-terrorism efforts and prevent conflict.

In addition, new findings across the social sciences continue to increase the efficiency of our industries, improve the quality of K-12 education, help us understand crime patterns and evaluate prevention strategies, help manage our natural resources, keep our troops safe, help us to be informed as consumers, and allow paralyzed individuals to communicate. Among the countless innovations enabled by federal support for basic social science research are telecommunications spectrum auctions, life-saving kidney exchanges, and warning systems to protect lives and property from extreme weather events, to name a few.

In short, knowledge derived from social and behavioral science research has made our population healthier, our democracy fairer, our nation safer, and our economy stronger. Without these sciences, policy-making on major national issues would not be based on evidence, and billions of dollars would be wasted.

## National Science Foundation

**COSSA joins the broader scientific community and the 161 Members of the House of Representatives who signed the March 16, 2018 bipartisan letter in support of \$8.45 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2019.** This amount would put NSF back on a growth trajectory and would allow the agency to recover some of the purchasing power lost in recent years due to sequestration and caps on discretionary spending.

Recognizing the centrality of scientific research to America’s broader economic, social, and security interests, more than 500 organizations representing top U.S. industries (including Boeing, John Deere, Microsoft, National Association of Manufacturers, and Northrop Grumman), higher education, and scientific and engineering societies endorsed the statement, *Innovation: An American Imperative* in 2015. The statement calls for at least 4 percent annual growth for federal basic science research agencies, such as NSF. The \$8.45 billion request for NSF would put the agency on track for this necessary increase. The U.S. scientific enterprise requires stability, predictability, and sustainable funding growth, and federal policies that are patient and can tolerate a reasonable amount of risk to achieve the greatest payoff.

NSF funds basic scientific discovery, workforce training, and state-of-the-art facilities that keep the U.S. ahead of our global scientific competitors. It is the only U.S. federal agency tasked with ***supporting scientific research across all fields of science***. NSF supports about a quarter of all federally-funded basic scientific research conducted at colleges and universities nationwide and serves as the largest single funder of university-based basic social and behavioral science research. Though the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE)—one of seven research directorates at NSF—represents less than 5 percent of the entire NSF research budget,

it supports around two-thirds of total federal funding for academic *basic research* in the social and behavioral sciences (excluding psychology). **Unfortunately, the President’s budget request proposes a disproportionate cut to the SBE Directorate, redirecting funds to other sciences. We strongly urge the committee to reject such a move, which would put in place an arbitrary process for allocating NSF resources.**

Instead, experts at NSF, the outcomes of the merit-review process, and the vast network of scholars around the country who provide technical and content expertise to the NSF leadership should be trusted to advise the agency on the most promising science worthy of support. NSF, through its gold-standard merit review process, allows the demands of scientific discovery to dictate how best to spend basic research dollars, leaving politics and individual ideologies at the door. It is important that Congress maintain NSF’s authority over the distribution of its precious research dollars and not set arbitrary funding levels for NSF’s individual directorates, keeping with current practice. **The House CJS Appropriations Bill should maintain current practice of appropriating funds to the Research & Related Activities account, leaving NSF with the flexibility to fund the most promising science across all fields.**

## Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce

**COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate \$4.735 billion for the U.S. Census Bureau in FY 2019** to keep the agency on track to execute an innovative and cost-effective 2020 Decennial Census and maintain support for its other crucial economic and demographic surveys. With the 2020 Census less than two years away, the Census Bureau is entering its peak phase of decennial operations. The Bureau is putting years of research, testing, evaluation, and development into practice in service of the nation’s largest peacetime mobilization. In FY 2019, the Bureau will finalize its operational plan for 2020, building on the lessons learned during the 2018 End-to-End Census Test, the “dress rehearsal” for the real count. The Bureau will begin hiring tens of thousands of census workers, launch the first phase of its public information campaign to educate communities about the Census, mobilize thousands of partner organizations to enhance its reach in hard-to-count communities, and finalize IT systems to ensure the security of Americans’ personal information.

With time before Census Day running out, robust and stable funding is essential in order for the Bureau to complete the necessary preparations and ensure a fair and accurate Census. The Census Bureau is obligated by the U.S. Constitution to count every person in the country, regardless of expense. Interfering with the careful preparations undertaken by the Census Bureau—by inadequately funding operations during the lead-up years or by adding last-minute untested questions to the form—will only add to costs down the road.

In addition, **COSSA calls on Congress to fully fund the American Community Survey (ACS) and maintain its status as a mandatory federal survey.** The ACS is the only source of comparable, consistent, timely, and high quality demographic and socio-economic data for all communities in the U.S. As a component of the Constitutionally-mandated Decennial Census, the ACS is a “mandatory” national survey. The accuracy of the data collected by the ACS relies on this

mandatory status. Targeted cuts and changes to make the survey voluntary would significantly undermine the ability to collect usable data on all U.S. counties, particularly in less populous, rural areas of the country.

## National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice

COSSA urges the Committee to appropriate \$42 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and \$48 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). NIJ serves as the research arm of the Department of Justice, filling an important role in helping the agency to understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control. It supports rigorous social science research that can be disseminated to criminal justice professionals to keep communities safe and prevent and reduce crime.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is one of 13 principal federal statistical agencies. BJS produces data that provides statistical evidence needed by researchers and criminal justice policy decision makers. Taken together with NIJ, these modest annual investments represent the only dedicated sources of federal research support committed to enhancing our understanding of crime and the criminal justice system, including around topics like victimization, law enforcement, recidivism and reentry, drugs and crime, and tribal justice.

Numerous pressing criminal justice and law enforcement issues are at the fore of public consciousness today, including **understanding the mental health needs** of people who become involved in the justice system, the **drivers of domestic radicalization**, **effective solutions to opioid addiction**, and **ways to improve police officer safety and community relations**. By working with jurisdictions at all levels to compile data and support research, DOJ—through NIJ and BJS investments—provides key insights that improve public safety. Making the results of this research available to state and local officials and the public allows justice and law enforcement professionals to learn what works, adopt best practices, and improve public safety by leveraging the best research and data to protect the public, reduce recidivism, and support law enforcement and communities. While objective research is needed now more than ever, federal funding in support of such research has been largely stagnant. **Congress must prioritize federal data collection and research if we are to provide local, state, and federal officials with the information they need** to develop strategies to improve public safety in our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the social and behavioral science research community. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.