COSSA
CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

2021 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
Putting Social and Behavioral Science to Work for America

From COVID-19 to racial inequity, climate change to a struggling economy, a disrupted educational system to record-breaking unemployment, the country finds itself in urgent need of immediate policy solutions—solutions that are based on unbiased, sound, and reliable science. Fortunately, there is virtually no aspect of human life that cannot be informed by research in the social and behavioral sciences.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that "business as usual" policies and practices, even when it comes to science, are not enough. Congress can strengthen the U.S. scientific enterprise by making it more sustainable, diverse, and responsive to emerging needs. By investing in and utilizing social and behavioral science insights, we can put *people* back at the center of policymaking.

Learn more at: https://www.cossa.org/policy/2021-transition/

I Restore Trust in Science and Government Data

Over the last four years, executive orders and other actions have hindered the ability of the federal government to receive unbiased, politically neutral scientific advice. Scientific advisory committees and task forces have been stacked with appointees having little to no relevant science background, while other advisory bodies have been effectively terminated altogether. In addition, the independence and autonomy of statistical agencies has been eroded by abuses and bureaucratic red tape at the hands of the previous administration.

The American public deserves a government that uses science as a tool for progress, rather than an instrument for advancing political agendas. Congress can advance this goal by strengthening the integrity and independence of the nation's scientific and data enterprise and ensuring that the government has access to scientific advice that is independent, credible, and free from politics.

COSSA calls on the 117th Congress to:

▶ Recommit to the use of well-qualified, independent, unbiased scientific advice in effective policymaking.

▶ Reconstitute lapsed and eliminated advisory committees for science and statistical agencies.

▶ Protect the integrity, stature and independence of the federal statistical system to preserve trust in federal data.

▶ Ensure statistical agencies have the authority to operate independently within their respective departments and agencies.

II Champion Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Science

We know from social and behavioral science research that our country is governed by social systems that were designed to bestow advantages and disadvantages unequally. The social and behavioral sciences have helped to

illuminate those structural inequities and the harms that they create; however, the scientific community has failed to effectively apply these insights to address the inequities within the scientific enterprise itself.

Congress should use social and behavioral science to build a diverse and inclusive U.S. scientific enterprise that reflects the diversity of the American population and to facilitate the collection of detailed demographic information to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion across the federal government.

COSSA calls on the 117th Congress to:

▶ Direct the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to undertake a consensus study that proposes a roadmap for addressing systemic racism and other barriers to participation in academia and the scientific workforce.

▶ Direct the National Science and Technology Council to appoint a national task force to develop and implement an action plan for increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in science.

▶ Enact legislation addressing sexual and other forms of harassment in science and provide adequate funding for implementation, including scientific research and data collection.

▶ Ensure the collection of detailed demographic information is standardized across federal science grant-making agencies.

III Enhance the Research and Data Enterprise & Expand the Use of Social and Behavioral Science and Data in Decision-Making

The U.S. scientific enterprise has long been the leader in global innovation, thanks in large part to the federal government's decades-long, sustained investment in fundamental, basic research. However, bridging the chasm between scientific discovery and effective policy has proven harder to achieve. A more holistic integration of social and behavioral science expertise within and across the federal government can help bridge the gap between scientific discovery and policy.

The U.S. scientific enterprise requires stable and predictable funding. Even before COVID-19, federal science agencies have struggled with unpredictable funding year-to-year, annual budget caps on domestic spending, government shutdowns, and hiring freezes, especially over the last four years. These challenges have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COSSA calls on the 117th Congress to:

▶ Double federal R&D and STEM education funding, from 0.7% of GDP to 1.4%, over the next five years.

▶ Increase funding for social and behavioral science research in fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations.

▶ Ensure federal statistical agencies have sufficient resources to meet their mandates and thrive.

▶ Establish dedicated funding for evidence-building activities at federal agencies.