



COSSA

Washington Update

Volume 26, Issue 1

January 15, 2007

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WELCOME TO 2007: 110TH CONGRESS UNDERWAY

On January 4th, the 110th Congress began its first session by officially making American history by electing the first ever female Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). The flip in party control as a result of the November elections has given the Democrats a chance to run both Houses of Congress for the first time since 1994. The House began a special 100 (legislative) hours of enacting key legislation regarding congressional reform, minimum wage, student aid, and other priorities. The Senate, as usual, is moving at a more leisurely pace.

Over the holidays, the illness of Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) demonstrated the tenuousness of the Democrats hold on the Senate, but he is recovering and the 51-49 majority is ok for now. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) was elected Majority Leader by his Democratic peers. Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) is his second-in-command as Majority Whip. The Republicans, back in the Senate minority for the first time since 2001, elected Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY) as the Minority Leader with the new "comeback kid," former Majority Leader Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS), restored to a leadership position as the Minority Whip.

Pelosi, who had spent some political capital supporting Rep. John Murtha (D-PA) for House Majority Leader, saw her choice rejected by the Democratic Caucus in favor of Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD). Rep. John Clyburn (D-SC) is the new Democratic Whip. The Republicans retained the leadership team of Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) and Rep. Roy Blunt (R-MO) as the new Minority Leader and Minority Whip. Former Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL), to the surprise of some, has remained in Congress, and has simply become another member of the House, albeit one with formidable connections.

Finishing FY 2007 Appropriations and the Earmark Debate

One of the important leftovers from the 109th Congress is the enactment of the FY 2007 spending bills for all government agencies not covered by the Defense and Homeland Security appropriations bills. In December, new Appropriations Committee chairs Rep. David Obey (D-WI) and Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) announced that they would finish these bills quickly when the 110th Congress began and simply freeze all agencies' spending at FY 2006 levels with room for some exceptions. They also announced that they would suspend all earmarks, special spending projects members of Congress deem worthy, from the remaining FY 2007 bills. In the meantime, the House and Senate are enacting reform measures that will make future earmarks more transparent, but not necessarily extinct.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced what will happen if its budget is frozen at FY 2006 levels (see other story). The National Science Foundation (NSF) has been part of the Administration's American Competitiveness Initiative, and many groups including COSSA, have asked for Congress to provide NSF's FY 2007 funding at the requested level, which would mean an eight percent increase. In addition, Census stakeholder groups, including COSSA, are making the argument that the ramp-up to the 2010 Census requires the increase proposed for the Bureau in FY 2007.

In the meantime, the FY 2008 budget is going through its finishing touches at the Office of Management and Budget for release on February 5. The current Continuing Resolution, which is funding those agencies without FY 2007 appropriations, expires on February 15. So, once again we may see a new budget without knowing the final figures for the old budget.

New Appropriations Alignment; New Cardinals

In the previous Congress, the House and Senate Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee did not align directly. For example, in the House there was a State, Science, Commerce, Justice panel, while the Senate had a Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) panel, with State included with the Foreign Operations panel. Obey and Byrd have changed that. There are now 12 Subcommittees in each House. A new Financial Services spending panel has been created that will include funding for the Treasury Department, the District of Columbia, the Federal Judiciary and other general government agencies. The House will now have a CJS panel with State Department funding included in the Foreign Operations panel, as in the previous Senate model.

With these changes and the party turnover, there is new leadership for the key Appropriations Subcommittees affecting social science funding. At CJS, which determines funding for the NSF, the Census Bureau, and the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Rep. Alan Mollohan (D-WV) and Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) will chair, while Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL), will be the respective Ranking Republicans.

At the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, Subcommittee Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) exchanged positions as Chair and Ranking Member. In the House, full committee chairmen, Obey will head this Subcommittee with Rep. James Walsh (R-NY) as the new Ranking Member.

The Agriculture and Rural Development panel in the House will have a Chair, Rep. Rosa De Lauro (D-CT), who is from Connecticut, a non-traditional agricultural state. Sen. Herb Kohl (D-WI) will lead the Senate panel. The Ranking Members are: Rep. Jack Kingston (R-GA) in the House, and Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT) in the Senate.

Political Scientist Rep. David Price (D-NC) takes over the House Homeland Security spending panel with full Committee chairman Byrd his Senate counterpart. The Ranking Republicans are Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) and Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS).

Authorizing Committees and their Agendas

Many of the authorizing committees are still organizing for the new Congress. Although Chairs and Ranking Members have been named at the full committee level, subcommittee leadership and jurisdiction are still under construction. This is what we know, so far.

The House Science Committee has restored Technology to its name. The new Chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee is Rep. Bart Gordon (R-TN) and Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX) is the new Ranking Republican. For the panel's proposed agenda, which includes a NSF reauthorization, see Update December 12, 2006.

The Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, which has jurisdiction over the NSF, will flip Chairman and Ranking Member. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) ascends to head the panel, while former Chairman Rep. Ted Stevens (R-AK) will become the Ranking Republican.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) will head the newly renamed Oversight and Government Reform Committee. Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) will become the Ranking Republican. The Committee will have a Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and the National Archives. Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) will head the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee with Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) as the Ranking Republican. These panels expect to focus on conducting hearings on the Administration's past and present activities, including plans for the 2010 Census and the new leadership team to run that undertaking now that Deputy Director Hermann Habermann has left the Bureau and Director Louis Kincannon hopes to leave by April (for earlier story on their resignations see Update, November 20, 2006).

With Labor back in its title, Rep. George Miller (D-CA) will lead the House Education and Labor Committee. Another Californian, Rep. Howard 'Buck' McKeon becomes Ranking Member. On the Senate side, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) returns to the chairmanship of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions panel, with Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) as Ranking. On the agenda of both committees is the completion of the Higher Education Act reauthorization, which includes the Title VI International Education and Foreign Language programs. A National Academy of Sciences panel is examining those programs and its report is expected this spring. The Committees will also lead the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. In addition, any NSF reauthorization would go through this Senate panel as well.

Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) are the new chairmen of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) and Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) are the Ranking members. Left pending from the previous Congress is legislation reauthorizing the Department of Justice. The Senate panel will handle judicial nominations, with the party switch making things more difficult for the Bush Administration. The Senate panel would also handle the nomination of a new Director of the National Institute of Justice.

New Temporary? Director for NIJ

In early December, the Attorney General designated Deputy Assistant Attorney General of the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) David Hagy to serve concurrently as principal Deputy Director of NIJ, thereby giving him authority to run the agency until a Presidential nomination is announced. Hagy has held a number of senior leadership positions in local government, ultimately rising to become Chief of Staff and Policy Director for Harris County, TX. He served as Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge's liaison to mayors and other local officials. He came to OJP to handle policy and budget issues, where he is also responsible for strategic planning and reviewing all solicitations, grants, and publications for the Assistant Attorney General. Hagy earned his undergraduate degree in Economics from Texas A&M University, and his masters and Ph.D. in Political Science from Tulane University.

The Agriculture Committees, which will deal with a 2007 Farm Bill, have new leaders: Rep. Collin Peterson (D-MN) in the House and Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) in the Senate. Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) and Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) are the respective Ranking Members.

Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Rep. John Spratt (R-SC), will lead the Budget Committees, which get first crack at the FY 2008 Administration's spending blueprint in February. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-NH) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) will lead the Republicans on the panels. Conrad has already proposed a bipartisan commission that would include members of Congress and the Administration to figure out how to deal with the entitlement programs, such as Medicare and Social Security, which are under stress with the coming baby boomer retirement bulge.

All of these activities will occur in a political situation where the war in Iraq remains a drain on human and financial resources, the 2008 presidential election jockeying has begun with numerous Senators having thrown or about to throw their hats in the ring, with a Republican party in the Congress readjusting to its new minority status after many years of ruling the roost, and with a Bush Administration adjusting to a non-supine legislative branch. It looks like another interesting year for COSSA's interactions with these institutions!

NIH: NO INFLATIONARY INCREASE IN FY 2007 FOR EXISTING NON-COMPETING GRANTS

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has announced that it will not provide inflationary increases for existing non-competing grants in FY 2007. The agency cited its "flat budget" and the need to take "immediate proactive steps to manage its portfolio of investments in biomedical research." NIH emphasizes that it "is committed to buttressing core areas of vulnerability, such as the ability of new investigators to compete for support in these difficult financial times, and protecting [its] investment in well established investigators with little or no other significant support."

It is also noted that Institutes and centers (ICs) "will maintain the flexibility to supplement such non-competing awards on a case by-case basis according to scientific and programmatic imperatives. However, such supplements will not be considered as part of the base for future budgetary adjustments."

The agency is operating under a continuing resolution until February 15th, at the FY 2006 funding level. Until the final FY 2007 appropriation is enacted, NIH will issue non-competing research grant awards at a level below that indicated on the most recent Notice of Award (generally up to 80 percent of the previously committed level). The agency explains that it "will consider upward adjustments to these levels after the final appropriation is enacted, but expects institutions to monitor their expenditures carefully during this period."

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-07-030.html>.

NIH EXPERIENCING 'A BIT OF PAIN'

According to National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Director Tom Insel, the National Institutes of Health is experiencing a "bit of pain," noting in his update to the Institute's National Advisory Mental Health Council (NAMHC), that "even a flat budget would be a reduction in purchasing power." It is not the first time, said Insel, noting that there has been a "fairly quick flattening" of the agency's budget over the last four years since the doubling. He

pointed out that it is not a result of the allocation of funds to the Roadmap for Medical Research created by National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Elias Zerhouni that is cited by the scientific community as “what is wrong with the budget” (\$17 million versus \$1.4 billion in the case of NIMH). The pain is the result of the significant increase in the number of applications that the agency has received since the doubling.

Insel emphasized that “now more than ever” the Institute will have to be strategic in its funding. This includes managing costs, maintaining diversity, and funding proposals that adhere to the policy guidelines that are available on the Institute’s website. It will also mean following the NIH-wide policy of eliminating the inflationary increases for non-competing grants. He emphasized, however, that the Institute does not want to be too conservative in its funding of research proposals and wants to fund “exciting, high-impact science.”

He explained that the average costs of grants have increased at a “striking” rate and the Institute has had to reduce the award size by 10-20 percent. The “really worrisome piece” for NIMH, he continued, is the drop to 60 from the 90s in the number of grants awarded to new investigators. The Institute will reallocate \$20 million from not paying the inflationary increase to fund additional investigators and new grants. That would allow the institute to maintain its level of funding new investigators. Insel stressed that he “is most concerned about losing a generation of researchers.” He indicated he may have to cut “even deeper” so as to prevent NIMH from falling below the rate of 70 new investigators per year. He cited the New Investigator award (K-99) created by Zerhouni last year as a “very exciting new opportunity” because it combines the K-award with the investigator-initiated (R01). NIMH plans to fund up to ten awards in FY 2007 and FY 2008, Insel related.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

NIMH Deputy Director Richard Nakamura updated NAMHC on diversity efforts at NIMH. The number of investigator-initiated (R01s) held by underrepresented minorities has declined slightly in proportion to the grant pool, according to Nakamura. Overall, the NIH is “well below” 6 percent. NIMH, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, however, are at the top of the NIH’s 27 Institutes and Centers near 6 percent.

Despite this, Nakamura expressed concern that NIMH’s proportion has dropped off. As a proportion of the overall rate, NIMH’s proportion is not going up, he lamented. One explanation, explained Nakamura, may be the change in the research mix that NIMH is currently supporting. The change in the Institute’s priority areas “may have had an adverse effect,” he posited.

Diversity of staff within NIMH’s intramural research “continues to struggle.” He noted, however, that the total number of NIMH staff had declined. It is “an unsatisfactory state of affairs, said Nakamura. Meanwhile NIMH has established a mentoring program in an effort to have a more focused effort to address the issue, Nakamura informed the council.

Peer Review: CSR Is Addressing the Challenges and the Opportunities

Center for Scientific Review (CSR) director Antonio Scarpa also addressed NAMHC. According to Scarpa, there are challenges and opportunities facing NIH peer review. He began by emphasizing the “strategic national importance of peer review.” It is what makes biomedical research in the U.S. second to none, he contended.

Peer review is an NIH conception and is the “heart and soul of NIH,” he explained. CSR receives approximately 80,000 grants applications per year, according to Scarpa. He noted that the scientific community is expressing concerns about peer review. These concerns

include the complaint that the process is too slow, along with a lack of enough senior and experienced reviewers. Scarpa explained that part of the problem is “intellectual now.” At the same time the, part of it is structural given that the process was designed for face-to-face meetings in Bethesda. Scarpa indicated that re-engineering the NIH Peer Review is a priority for Zerhouni.

According to Scarpa, the first challenge is a mechanical issue - reassigning and improving administration and organizational systems and procedures. The second challenge is cultural - facilitating the identification and advancement of more significant, innovative, and high impact research.

The NIH’s vision for peer review include: shortening the review cycle, improving study section alignment and performance, increased recruitment and retaining of high quality reviewers and decreased the burden on applicants and reviewers.

To get the input of the scientific community, CSR will begin holding Open House meetings throughout 2007. The meetings will provide a unique opportunity to engage stakeholders in a meaningful and substantial manner. CSR is seeking comments on such questions as:

- Is your science being served within the current Study Section alignment?
- Does the current Study Section alignment allow for an appropriate review of your science?
- Are Study Sections current with the present and burgeoning trends in your science?
- Where do you see the growth in your science area; what are the “hot” and “cool” areas of your science?

CSR’s first Open House will be held March 2nd on the NIH campus and will look at the neurological study sections. An April 25th Open House will address the Behavioral and Social Science Study Sections.

NIDA SPONSORED SURVEY FINDS TEEN DRUG USE DOWN

On December 21, 2006, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) announced the results of the 2006 Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) on teen drug use at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) director, John Walters; United States Attorney General, Alberto Gonzales; director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Nora Volkow; and principal investigator of the study, Lloyd Johnston participated in the news conference.

Now in its 32nd year, the study surveyed 50,000 students in the 8th, 10th and 12th grades at more than 400 schools nationwide. According to the MTF study, the percentage of U.S. adolescents who use illicit drugs or drink alcohol continued a decade-long drop in 2006. This year the survey revealed a 23.2 percent decline in illicit drug use over a five-year period, coming close to President Bush’s goal of reducing youth drug use to 25 percent by 2006.

The self-reported study captured teen drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and the past month. The results showed that marijuana continues to be the most commonly used illicit drug among teens, although current use of marijuana dropped by 25 percent over the past five years. Between years 2005 to 2006 marijuana use dropped by seven percent alone among all three grades combined. Methamphetamine abuse also showed a decline on all indicators for each grade since 2001.

Contrarily, a question on the non-medical use of over-the-counter cough or cold medicines was added to the 2006 survey, with nearly 7% of 12th graders reporting past year abuse of cough or

cold medicines to get high. In addition, the study showed that the use of prescription drugs remains high. It was found that while fewer teens overall drank alcohol or used illegal drugs in the last year, a small but growing number were abusing prescription painkillers like OxyContin and Vicodin.

When asked what can be done to prevent this trend from spreading, Walters responded, "If there is one thing that every adult can do today to help protect young people against prescription drugs, it is go to your medicine cabinet, take those prescription drugs you are finished using and throw them away. That is the one thing you can do."

The MTF also found that the use of cigarettes and alcohol declining across-the-board. In addition, past year abuse of bidis (small, flavored cigarettes from India) decreased among 12th graders, from 3.3 percent in 2005 to 2.3 percent in 2006.

"Many fewer of today's students have ever even tried smoking than was true a decade ago, when recent peak levels in lifetime prevalence were attained," said principal investigator Johnston. "While 49 percent of the 8th graders in 1996 had tried cigarettes, only 25 percent of the 8th graders in 2006 indicated having done so," Johnston reported.

Conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research and funded by NIDA, MTF it is one of three major surveys through which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services monitors the nation's substance abuse patterns. Information from these surveys helps the nation to identify potential drug problem areas and ensure that resources are targeted to areas of greatest need. The complete MTF study results can be viewed at www.monitoringthefuture.org.

RESEARCH ON SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND CONCEPTS IN HEALTH

As one of the largest allied health professions, social work is a primary provider of psychosocial interventions and services intended to facilitate treatment of medical conditions, improve disease management and prevention, and address related social, psychological or emotional problems in order to improve health and functioning. The underlying theoretical perspective of social work is the biopsychosocial model, derived from systems theory, which posits that physical, psychological, and social environmental conditions influence one another and must be taken into account in order to optimize health outcomes and functioning. The profession has developed significant clinical expertise in working within and across systems of care and services on a variety of levels.

The Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) along with Cancer ; Heart, Lung Blood; Aging; Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Child Health and Human Development; Drug Abuse; Mental Health; and Nursing institutes, and the Office of Disease Prevention and Office of Research on Women's Health are seeking innovative, theory-driven empirical research on social work practice, concepts and theory as these relate to the NIH public health goal of improving health outcomes for persons with medical and behavioral disorders and conditions (PA-07-292).

Areas of interest include studies that characterize the usual and/or "best" practices of social workers and how these relate to health outcomes, studies establishing the efficacy and effectiveness of health-related interventions and services delivered by social workers, aspects of health-related social work services that are unique to specialty health care settings and non-specialty health care settings, the nature and impact of routine prevention or clinical practice, and factors related to successful dissemination and implementation of social work services and interventions with proven effectiveness.

For more information see: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-07-292>.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Published 22 times a year, the Washington UPDATE is written and produced by the COSSA staff and covers Federal policies and debates relevant to social and behavioral scientists. This issue is the first of Volume 26, for previous issues going back to 1998 go to www.cossa.org, click on communications and then UPDATE. Earlier archived issues are available from COSSA.

Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for future issues, please feel free to contact Pamela Pressley at ppressley@cosa.org or at 202-842-3525.

Also, transcripts are available for COSSA's May 2006 congressional briefing entitled, "Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System: Offenders and Victims." Please email cosa@cosa.org or visit our website for a complimentary copy.

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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.

UPDATE is published 22 times per year. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA at newsletters@cosa.org

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