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COSSA Washington Update

IN THIS ISSUE:

[COSSA Has Moved to a New Address](#)

[110th Congress Leaves for Election: Lame Duck Growing More Likely](#)

[Election Forum Looks at Health and Science Research Funding](#)

[Presidential Candidates' Responses on Support for Basic Research](#)

[DeGette Introduces New Legislation on Human Subjects' Protection](#)

[Peer Review: New NIH Policy to Fund Meritorious Science Earlier](#)

[IOM Meeting Focuses on Behavioral/Social Determinants of Health](#)

[Alcohol Use Disorder Focus of Congressional Briefing](#)

[Brookings Session and Journal Re-Examine the Juvenile Justice System](#)

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COSSA HAS MOVED TO A NEW ADDRESS:

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110TH CONGRESS LEAVES FOR ELECTION: LAME DUCK GROWING MORE LIKELY

On October 3, after the House of Representatives finally agreed to the bank rescue package, members of the 110th Congress were liberated to return home and begin their sprints to re-election. The House was subject to a recall by its leaders, while the Senate continued with pro forma sessions through the election. When they left, the prospect of a full lame-duck session seemed remote, but as the economy continues to falter it now appears that Congress will make another attempt to enact a stimulus package, if the Administration is willing to cooperate, and that both the House and Senate will return to legislate the week of November 17. In the meantime, House Committees are holding hearings on the economy.

Looking back over the 110th legislative session a number of achievements occurred, but the battle over appropriations led to frustrating outcomes for government agencies and their advocates. The FY 2008 process ended with a Consolidated Appropriations Act enacted on December 17, 2007, almost three months after the onset of the fiscal year. Most of the agencies were simply funded at their FY 2007 levels. This followed a series of confrontations with the White House over discretionary spending amounts, on which the Administration prevailed. One consequence was that the National Science Foundation's (NSF) budget for FY 2008, which initially appeared to be slated for a large increase after separate House and Senate action, ended as a slight increase when the process was complete. NSF, however, did get a small slice of the FY 2008 War Supplemental enacted in June 2008.

For FY 2009, the Democratic leadership decided they wanted no more confrontations with the White House over spending and enacted only three regular appropriations bills - Defense, Homeland Security, and Military Construction - putting them and funding for all other agencies into a Continuing Resolution (CR) that again provided most agencies the previous fiscal year's appropriations level. The CR will last into early March, when the new Congress and the new President will work to provide agencies' with their full FY 2009 spending levels. However, in 2007 when the Democrats took over the Congress and had to deal with left-over FY 2007 spending bills, they simply (with a few exceptions) extended appropriations at the FY 2006 level and moved on. With some projecting the FY 2009 deficit at close to \$1 trillion, the temptation might be to re-enact the FY 2007 and FY 2008 scenarios.

One agency that was largely exempt from these appropriations' shenanigans was the U.S. Census Bureau. The Bureau and its many stakeholders, including COSSA, were able to convince the Congress that the ramp-up to the 2010 count required substantial increases in the Bureau's budget. This did not come without difficulties, as the Census Bureau invoked the ire of many on Capitol Hill with its bungling of the contract that was supposed to provide hand-held computers for Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) activities. It turned out these handhelds did not work as planned and the Bureau had to request additional funds for moving back to a paper-based NRFU. Many hearings were held with many lectures from the dais to Census directors, but in the end Congress understood that the count must go on!

After many long years of discussion and political indecision, this Congress managed to pass a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Despite concerns that the international education and foreign language programs of Title VI might become subject to a politically tinged oversight board, this did not happen. A highly supportive National Academies' study and the new Democratic majority eased this earlier proposal to the side. For other provisions of the new HEA, see Update, [August 11, 2008](#).

The 110th Congress also enacted new Farm Legislation. Although much of the focus remained on commodities and crop subsidies, the new law substantially revamped the research function of the Department of Agriculture. For a full description of the changes see Update, [June 16, 2008](#).

During the past two years, the Research and Science Education Subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee has had Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA) as its chairman. Baird, a Ph.D. psychologist, used his position to conduct three hearings on the importance of the social and behavioral sciences to the nation's science and public policy agendas. The first hearing focused on energy (see Update, [October 10, 2007](#)), the second held jointly with the House Armed Services Committee examined the social/behavioral sciences and national security (see Update, [May 5, 2008](#)), while the third looked at health (see Update, [September 22, 2008](#)).

This Congress also responded to the National Academies' report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* by enacting the America COMPETES Act. The Act focused mainly on creating new and expanding already-existing programs that support Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education. The legislation also reauthorized the NSF and included language to double the agency's budget in seven years. During the House-Senate conference committee's consideration of the final version of COMPETES, Baird insisted on including the social sciences as part of NSF's priorities (see Update, [August 6, 2007](#)). Baird and the Subcommittee's Ranking Republican Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI) also played significant roles in thwarting an attempt by Republicans in the House to defund already awarded grants during the debate on the House floor concerning NSF's reauthorization (see Update, [May 14, 2007](#)).

Nanotechnology remains a major initiative of the Federal government. This Congress needed to reauthorize government support for the multi-agency research effort in this area. They did so and reinforced the previous bill's support for social, legal, and ethical implications' studies while adding a new emphasis on research regarding the safety and health ramifications of nanotechnology.

Finally, saving large surveys was also part of the 110th Congress' legacy. The Census Bureau wanted to abolish the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), Congress said no. The Bureau of Labor Statistics wanted to end its support for the American Time Use Survey, Congress refused. The Administration wanted to cancel the National Children's Study and Congress saved it.

The Committees of the 110th Congress held many hearings that examined the implementation of the National Institutes of Health Reform Act, the rise in crime in some places and not others, immigration, the economy, improving culture and language training for the military, and many other topics where social and behavioral scientists made their contributions.

When the 111th Congress convenes early next January, with a new Administration coming later that month, it appears that the economy, including energy policy, will dominate the agenda. However, there are some left-overs that the 110th punted on, most notably the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind. And always, there will be appropriations to

fund government programs near and dear to the hearts of Americans and their advocates.

ELECTION FORUM LOOKS AT HEALTH AND SCIENCE RESEARCH FUNDING

On October 14, the health advocacy group Research!America sponsored an election forum on “Presidential Health and Economic Policy.” Ike Brannon, a former Treasury Department and Office of Management and Budget official, represented the McCain campaign. Tim Westmoreland, a professor of law and public policy at Georgetown who ran the Federal Medicaid program, represented the Obama campaign. Although there were no questions about McCain or Obama’s well-being, moderator David Leonhardt of the New York Times, spent much of the allotted time focused on the candidates’ health insurance plans we have heard about on all the debates.

About two-thirds of the way through Leonhardt asked the spokesmen to focus on funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). He asked what the NIH budget would look like at the end of a two-term McCain or Obama Administration. Neither spokesperson would commit to a number. Brannon noted how McCain supported the doubling for science funding over seven years included in the America COMPETES Act. Unfortunately, the NIH is not included in the COMPETES Act. Westmoreland suggested Obama would double funds for basic research over four years. Obama also supports increased funding for comparative effectiveness of medical procedures research, according to Westmoreland.

Brannon declared that science and research would be exempt from McCain’s proposed one year discretionary spending freeze, since the “government gets the most bang for the buck” from these expenditures. He also admitted that McCain thought the recent flat funding for NIH, following the budget doubling from 1998-2003, was not a bad thing. “The four year pause [in funding increases] was healthy,” Brannon suggested, since NIH needed the time to “digest” the previous hefty enhancements.

Westmoreland heartily agreed to Leonhardt’s contention that there was “a general lack of respect by the current Administration for science.” The Bush Administration, the Obama spokesman argued, “subordinated science to politics,” particularly with respect to global warming and its support for abstinence-only sex education. Countering Westmoreland’s criticism of McCain for not standing up for science during his tenure as Chairman of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, Brannon indicated that his candidate had been a leader in support for climate change research.

The Forum was held a day after the death of former Congressman Paul Rogers (D-FL), known as “Mr. Health”. Rogers, who helped enact many laws related to health and health research, also chaired the Research!America Board of Trustees for 13 years. Current chair, former Rep. John Porter (R-IL), gave an eloquent tribute to Rogers prior to the discussion.

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES’ RESPONSES ON SUPPORT FOR BASIC RESEARCH

The group ScienceDebate2008, which had tried to sponsor a discussion between the presidential candidates focused on science and technology, had to settle for written responses from the campaigns to a series of questions. Below are the answers from McCain and Obama to the question:

For many years, Congress has recognized the importance of science and engineering research to realizing our national goals. Given that the next Congress will likely face spending constraints, what priority would you give to investment in basic research in upcoming budgets?

McCAIN:

“With spending constraints, it will be more important than ever to ensure we are maximizing our investments in basic research and minimizing the bureaucratic requirements that eat away at the money designed for funding scientists and science. Basic research serves as the foundation for many new discoveries and represents a critical investment for the future of the country and the innovations that drive our economy and protect our people. I have supported significant increases in basic research at the National Science Foundation. I also called for a plan developed by our top scientists on how the funding should be utilized. We must ensure that our research is addressing our national needs and taking advantage of new areas of opportunities and that the results of this research can enter the marketplace. We must also ensure that basic research money is allocated to the best science based on quality and peer review, not politics and earmarks.

I am committed to reinvigorating America’s commitment to basic research, and will ensure my administration funds research activities accordingly. I have supported increased funding at DOE, NSF, and NIH for years and will continue to do so. I will continue my commitment to ensure that the funding is properly managed and that the nation’s research needs are adequately addressed.”

OBAMA:

"Federally supported basic research, aimed at understanding many features of nature— from the size of the universe to subatomic particles, from the chemical reactions that support a living cell to interactions that sustain ecosystems—has been an essential feature of American life for over fifty years. While the outcomes of specific projects are never predictable, basic research has been a reliable source of new knowledge that has fueled important developments in fields ranging from telecommunications to medicine, yielding remarkable rates of economic return and ensuring American leadership in industry, military power, and higher education. I believe that continued investment in fundamental research is essential for ensuring healthier lives, better sources of energy, superior military capacity, and high-wage jobs for our nation's future.

Yet, today, we are clearly under-investing in research across the spectrum of scientific and engineering disciplines. Federal support for the physical sciences and engineering has been declining as a fraction of GDP for decades, and, after a period of growth of the life sciences, the NIH budget has been steadily losing buying power for the past six years. As a result, our science agencies are often able to support no more than one in ten proposals that they receive, arresting the careers of our young scientists and blocking our ability to pursue many remarkable recent advances. Furthermore, in this environment, scientists are less likely to pursue the risky research that may lead to the most important breakthroughs. Finally, we are reducing support for science at a time when many other nations are increasing it, a situation that already threatens our leadership in many critical areas of science.

This situation is unacceptable. As president, I will increase funding for basic research in physical and life sciences, mathematics, and engineering at a rate that would double basic research budgets over the next decade. Sustained and predictable increases in research funding will allow the United States to accomplish a great deal. First, we can expand the frontiers of human knowledge. Second, we can provide greater support for high-risk, high-return research and for young scientists at the beginning of their careers. Third, we can harness science and technology to address the "grand challenges" of the 21st century: energy, health, food and water, national security, information technology, and manufacturing capacity."

For the responses to the full 14 questions go to: <http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/index.php?id=42> .

DEGETTE INTRODUCES NEW LEGISLATION ON HUMAN SUBJECTS' PROTECTION

Just before Congress left for its election recess, Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO) introduced the "Protection for Participants in Research Act of 2008" (H.R. 7140). The Congresswoman has been discussing her proposed legislation for a number of years with advocacy groups, including COSSA.

The legislation leaves the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), the federal agency which provides guidelines for research with human participants, in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The bill reaffirms support for the Common Rule that governs federal oversight of this research. DeGette, however, calls for a review by the HHS Secretary of these regulations and others that govern research conducted by the Food and Drug Administration with the goal of "harmonizing" the two sets of rules. The bill also calls for voluntary (rather than mandatory) accreditation of human research protection programs.

There are a number of provisions affecting Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), but no mandatory education requirement as recently proposed by OHRP (see Update, July 14, 2008). She does want the HHS Secretary to complete a study and report to Congress on whether to increase the number of members of an IRB who are individuals "whose primary expertise is in nonscientific areas or who are not affiliated with the institution served by the Board."

Since it is unlikely that this bill will see action in the remaining days of the 110th Congress, DeGette will need to reintroduce it next year to re-start the legislative discussion.

PEER REVIEW: NEW NIH POLICY TO FUND MERITORIOUS SCIENCE EARLIER

On October 8, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) released its new policy that will decrease the number of allowed grant application resubmissions from two to one. The new policy is a part of a continuing series of changes to the NIH peer review system following an in depth review and a yearlong self-assessment that concluded in June 2008 (see Update, [June 16, 2008](#)).

The policy change reflects the agency's analysis that indicated an increasing number of meritorious applicants that were ultimately funded had to resubmit their applications multiple times resulting in an increased burden on applicants and reviewers alike. NIH's previous policy allowed research applicants two attempts (amended applications known as A1 and A2 resubmissions) to improve upon their original application (known as A0 submission) based on feedback from peer reviewers. To address these inefficiencies and extra burden on the entire community -- and to fund meritorious applications earlier -- the NIH plans to phase out second amendments for new applications submitted beginning January 25, 2009.

All original new applications (i.e., never submitted) and competing renewal applications will be permitted only a single amendment (A1). For this and subsequent cohorts of original new and competing renewal applications, any second amendment (A2) will be administratively withdrawn and not accepted for review. Applicants who fail to receive funding after two submissions may resubmit but only if the application is fundamentally revised to qualify as new. A new application is expected to be substantially different in content and scope with more significant differences than are normally encountered in an amended application. Note that there is no time limit for the submission of the original and subsequent A1.

Original new and competing renewal applications that were submitted prior to January 25, 2009 will be permitted two amendments (A1 and A2). For these "grandfathered" applications, NIH expects that any A2 will be submitted no later than January 7, 2011, and NIH will not accept A2 applications after that date.

The announcement is one of a series that the agency plans to send out in the coming months about specific policies to enhance its peer review system. Future topics will include early stage investigators and grant application scoring. Information on the new policy to fund meritorious science earlier may be found on the Enhancing Peer Review Web site <http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov/resubmission.html#data>.

IOM MEETING FOCUSES ON BEHAVIORAL/SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

(This article was written by Lee Herring of the American Sociological Association. We appreciate his help.)

"In calculating the area of a rectangle, which contributes more to the area's total: The base or the side?" A trick question? No, but professor Jack P. Shonkoff used the riddle to succinctly characterize the nonsensical, but often-asked, question about the relative contributions of nature/genes or environment/experience to complex phenomena such as an organism's behavior or a person's health, illness, or intelligence. Shonkoff, of Harvard University's medical school, thus set the tone for the first session, "The Biological Endowment and Susceptibility to Disease," of the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) two-day Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. The session was one of five panels and individual presentations that comprised the entire second day of the 38th IOM meeting, the public portion of the meeting, on October 13.

While there were only a handful of social scientists among the 17 speakers, the all-day focus on issues behavioral and social was intense and serious. And the several biologist speakers all discussed how their research interfaced with key social and behavior factors in modulating health and illness. The purpose of the meeting's focus, however, was undermined somewhat when the annual roster of newly elected members to the IOM, released the previous day, included a typical roll of renowned biomedical, molecular, cellular, and genetic researchers (65 in all) but did not include any social scientists, even though there are deserving members of this latter community contributing to medical science, and there are some social scientists already among the IOM member ranks. As it does nearly every year, IOM also released a few studies this year that draw on social science expertise (e.g., *Cancer Care for the Whole Patient: Meeting Psychosocial Health Needs* and *Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: An Assessment of the Evidence*), thus making the absence of new members hailing from our COSSA disciplines, for example, more puzzling.

Among speakers at the October 13 meeting of particular interest to *COSSA UPDATE* readers would be: anthropologist Susan C. Scrimshaw, Interim President of The Sage Colleges, who introduced the day's program; epidemiologist Teresa Seeman, of the Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA who introduced the first session, which included physician Jack P. Shonkoff, director of Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, who spoke about the "The Early Childhood Roots of A Lifetime of Physical and Mental Health"; Columbia University psychologist Frances A. Champagne, who spoke about "The Interplay of Genes and the Environment in Determining Plasticity Across the Life Span." Shonkoff emphasized the inherently interactive nature of biology and environment and elaborated on the long-term effects of early adverse life experiences. The second panel, which addressed "The Health of Populations: Networks, Neighborhoods, Disparities and Health," included, among others, epidemiologist Lisa F. Berkman, director of the Center for Population and International

Health at Harvard School of Public Health and a former COSSA congressional seminar speaker; and epidemiologist and physician Ana V. Diez Roux, director of the Center for Integrative Approaches to Health Disparities at the University of Michigan.

A panel of two Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health and Society Scholars was introduced by Harvard Medical School Emeritus Professor of Social Medicine Leon Eisenberg, whose panel addressed "Interdisciplinary/Bridging Work In Health Disparities." Panelists included Elliot Friedman, from the Institute on Aging at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Rebecca Thurston, of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh. A final panel on "Rethinking How to Achieve Individual and Population Health," chaired by Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, President and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, included former U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher, speaking on the "Social Determinants of Health and Their Implications for Public Health"; and sociologist Mary Woolley, President and CEO of Research!America, speaking on Americans' attitudes toward health research. *Health Affairs* magazine Editor-in-Chief Susan Dentzer made an engaging appeal to broaden the national health care reform public debate that has become a central component of the presidential campaigns.

PowerPoint slides of the presentations are accessible at the IOM website:
(<http://www.iom.edu/CMS/2951/16671/16689/43074.aspx>).

ALCOHOL USE DISORDER FOCUS OF CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

Alcohol use disorder (AUD) arises from drinking too much, too fast and/or too often whereas alcohol abuse is defined as a recurring pattern of high-risk drinking that creates problems for the drinker, for others, or for society. Alcohol dependence, typically considered to be synonymous with alcoholism (alcohol addiction), is a complex disease characterized by persistent and intense alcohol-seeking, which results in a loss of control over drinking, a preoccupation with drinking, compulsion to drink or inability to stop, and the development of tolerance and dependence.

In an effort to shed light on combating AUD, on October 8 the Friends of National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) sponsored a congressional briefing to present findings that foreshadow shifts in treatment strategies for alcohol dependence.

Outgoing NIAAA Director Ting-Kai Li who is set to retire this year, provided a brief overview on how research has changed basic understanding of alcoholism treatment and prevention. Li emphasized that new research suggests treatment that integrates addiction, physical and mental health care with disease management shows great promise for treating the chronic relapsing form of alcohol dependence. However, with heavy drinking and alcohol dependence as the third leading cause of preventable death and the second leading cause of disability among 18-44 year-olds, only 1 in 8 persons with alcohol dependence ever seek specialty treatment. Contrarily, non-dependent drinkers respond well to brief motivational counseling and many dependent drinkers can recover with medication and brief support from primary doctors but information and services need to be accessible, affordable and attractive.

Kenneth J. Sher, professor of psychological science at the University of Missouri, reported that alcohol serves important functions for the problem drinker, such as enhancement or positive reinforcement, coping with negative situations, social lubrication and conformity. Sher described recent findings on the development of heavy drinking and alcohol dependence and how its research may lead to the development of more effective personalized treatments. "Treatments can be developed to address AUD's with respect to generalized externalizing pathology and alcohol specific motivation. Thus, targeting the process underlying vulnerability to a range of problem behavior, and ways of handling urges or impulses to drink or get drunk."

Mark Willenbring, director of the NIAAA Treatment and Recovery Research Division believes new directions in diagnosis can lead to innovative treatment and a speedy recovery. "Research has advanced our ability to tailor treatment for patients with widely varying levels of alcohol use" says Willenbring. "But more research is needed, specifically on how to prevent onset on early intervention and how to facilitate and maintain recovery."

The NIAAA's Strategic Plan for Research, 2008-2013 sets forth a fundamental organizing principle for alcohol research studies and describes research opportunities to deepen and broaden our understanding of alcohol use and alcohol use disorders. More information on this subject can be found on the NIAAA's website at: www.niaaa.nih.gov.

BROOKINGS SESSION AND JOURNAL RE-EXAMINE THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Future of Children, a joint project between the Brookings Institution and Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, recently released the Fall Issue of its journal which focused on juvenile justice policies and practices. On October 15, Brookings held a briefing on Juvenile Justice co-sponsored by the MacArthur Foundation. In 1997 the Foundation established a Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice to consider the ways in which scientific knowledge about adolescent development and juvenile crime could inform policy and practice within the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

The event featured: Laurence Steinberg, Professor of Psychology at Temple University and the editor of the journal issue; Shay Bilchik, former administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP); Hon. Denton Darrington, Chairman of the Idaho Senate Judiciary Committee, who co-chaired a commission that examined his state's juvenile justice system; Jeffrey Fagan, Professor of Law and Public Health at Columbia University; Kristin Henning, Professor of Law at Georgetown University; Bart Lubow of the Annie Casey Foundation, and Cristine Crooks, from the Office of Rep. Michael Castle (R-DE).

According to Brookings, after a decade of declining juvenile crime rates, the forces that fueled the "get-tough" reforms of the 1990s have waned, as has enthusiasm for the policies that eroded the boundaries between juvenile and criminal courts, exposing juvenile defenders to harsh punishments. A re-examination of these policies at the state and federal level has the juvenile justice system in transition.

The speakers indicated that emerging research provides evidence that adolescents do not have the same emotional or mental maturity that adults have, and therefore should not be treated as adults when they enter the criminal justice system. As Steinberg, noted: "The scientific study of adolescent development has burgeoned in the past two decades, but its findings have not yet influenced juvenile justice policy nearly as much as they should." The authors of the journal articles call for three reforms to the juvenile justice system: change the policies and practices of the system to emphasize that it is dealing with adolescents not adults; revamp the system to limit incarceration and focus on rehabilitation; and cooperate more with other youth serving agencies to help address the wide ranging problems that affect most of the adolescents who enter the system.

Crooks noted the work of the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), in marking up legislation to reauthorize OJJDP (S. 3155). Key provisions of the bill would require state juvenile justice systems to: (1) assure statewide compliance with the core requirement of the Act for protection of incarcerated juveniles; (2) provide alternatives to detention for juveniles who are status or first-time minor offenders; (3) use community-based services to address the needs of at-risk youth; (4) implement programs to improve the recruitment, selection, training, and retention of professionals working in juvenile delinquency prevention programs; and (5) identify racial and ethnic disparities among juveniles in the juvenile justice system. The bill has not passed the Senate.

For more information on this event and the journal issue please go to: www.futureofchildren.org

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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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