



**Testimony in Support of Federal Science Funding in Fiscal Year 2015
Submitted to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
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**Submitted by
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On behalf of the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), I am pleased to offer this written testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies for inclusion in the official committee record. For fiscal year (FY) 2015, COSSA urges the Subcommittee to appropriate \$7.5 billion for the National Science Foundation (NSF), \$47.5 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), \$55.4 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and \$107 million for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).

COSSA is proud to serve as the united voice for the social and behavioral sciences, bridging the academic research community with federal policymakers. Its membership consists of more than 100 professional associations, scientific societies, universities, and research centers and institutes, representing thousands of scientists working in industry, government, and academia.

National Science Foundation

First, I wish to thank the Subcommittee for its longstanding commitment to ensuring adequate funding for basic research, particularly at the National Science Foundation. The unwavering support of the Chairman, Ranking Member, and other members of the committee is greatly appreciated. Chairman Wolf's leadership will be sorely missed.

COSSA joins many throughout the scientific community in support of \$7.5 billion for NSF in FY 2015, an increase of five percent. This amount would return NSF to its FY 2010 funding level when adjusting for inflation and would allow the agency to recover some of the purchasing power lost in recent years due to sequestration and caps on discretionary spending. The amount would also attempt to put NSF back on track with the vision of the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010*, which authorized NSF at \$7.4 billion in FY 2011, \$7.8 billion in FY 2012, and \$8.3 billion in FY 2013. If the U.S. is to maintain its scientific competitiveness on the global stage, we as a nation must continue to prioritize investments in science and technology and not abandon the aspirations set forth in the original America COMPETES Act of 2007 and its reauthorization in 2011.

Unfortunately, some in the House of Representatives are seeking to do just that. COSSA is deeply concerned about the impacts the *Frontiers in Research, Science and Technology Act* (H.R. 4186), or FIRST Act, would have on NSF, the scientific community overall, and American innovation and intellectual competitiveness. Not only does the FIRST Act lack vision for the U.S. scientific enterprise by authorizing levels for NSF that would cut funding to the agency in terms of real dollars, it would also degrade NSF's gold-standard merit review process by seeking to micromanage the agency's award-making process. Regrettably, the legislation has become a soapbox for lawmakers wishing to hurl ideological attacks on specific research areas, such as social and behavioral science or climate science. The inclusion of specific authorization levels for NSF's individual science directorates would set a dangerous precedent by allowing Congress to legislate what qualifies as meritorious science, as opposed to continuing to rely on a process that has served this nation well; that is, entrusting qualified experts to make such determinations.

Equally distressing are the attempts to single out the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) Directorate. The shortsightedness of critics of social and behavioral science research is disappointing. Publicly holding up individual research grants for ridicule based solely on their titles—research projects for which a distinguished panel of scientific peers has determined them meritorious—misleads the American public by asserting that taxpayer funding is being wasted without fully understanding the projects, their intent, and the benefit to society and/or the progress of science.

Should the cuts to the SBE directorate occur as proposed in the FIRST Act, federal support for programs that have proven their value to the U.S. economy, national security, and the health of our citizens would be decimated. Such cuts would undermine the U.S.'s ability to answer questions of national importance, such as how to convince a community in the path of a tornado to seek cover, or statistical analyses that help local governments understand crime patterns, among others. Without this science, and without an understanding of the fundamental nature of who we are, policy-making on major national issues will not be based on evidence and billions of dollars will be wasted.

Consider the breakthroughs that would not have been possible without federal support. For example, research supported by NSF has provided the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with its current system for apportioning the airwaves via a fruitful, practical application of game theory and experimental economics. Since its inception in 1994, FCC "spectrum auctions" have netted over \$60 billion in revenue for the federal government. The U.S. system of partitioning airwaves is now emulated in several other countries around the world, resulting in total worldwide revenues in excess of \$200 billion.¹

In addition, researchers at Indiana University, Drexel University, and Arizona State University developed spatial models to help manage the location of sex offenders. Their research addressed concerns regarding the impact of sex offender residency laws on a community, considering important factors such as whether residency restrictions lead to high concentrations of offenders in specific areas, distribute the risk across a community equitably, and keep sex offenders from living near minors. Improving the development and evaluation of sex offender residency policies

¹ *Bringing People Into Focus: How Social, Behavioral and Economic Research Addresses National Challenges, National Science Foundation (NSF 13-62).*

in advance of any legislation allows public officials the opportunity to consider the resulting distribution of offenders in terms of local residents, better meeting the needs of communities.²

Finally, researchers at Washington University in St. Louis investigated emotion recognition using nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, vocal tones, and body language. Based on this research, the Army Research Institute now incorporates education on nonverbal communication into soldier training, thereby assisting troops in understanding cross-cultural, nonverbal communication with non-English speaking citizens with whom they interact overseas. Thus, this research has the potential to provide human solutions in military situations. It has been demonstrated that enhancing troops' interpersonal skills can enable them to anticipate and diffuse conflict, as well as facilitate cooperation, negotiation and compromise.³

At a time when we should be investing in our knowledge economy and doing all we can to encourage a diverse scientific workforce, efforts are being made through the FIRST Act and other means to set us back even further. This legislation would have a chilling effect, discouraging the next generation of researchers to embark on science careers.

The U.S. scientific enterprise must remain insulated from political and ideological pressure if we are to encourage the most innovative science. COSSA urges the Subcommittee to appropriate \$7.5 million for NSF in FY 2015 and object to proposals that would undermine the peer review process by legislating funding levels for NSF science directorates. Further, as you move through the appropriations process this year, COSSA further urges you to discourage and object to amendments that would defund or otherwise compromise specific research areas or programs at NSF, as we saw with the political science amendment in FY 2013.

**National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics
U.S. Department of Justice**

COSSA urges the Subcommittee to appropriate \$47.5 million for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and \$55.4 million for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). These levels are equal to the President's FY 2015 budget request. Taken together—roughly \$100 million—this modest investment represents the only pot of federal research dollars committed to enhancing our understanding of crime and the criminal justice system.

As the research arm of DOJ, NIJ plays a critical role in helping us understand and implement science-based strategies for crime prevention and control. The President seeks additional investment for the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative in FY 2015 as part of the Opportunity, Growth, and Security Initiative; the initiative received \$75 million in FY 2014. COSSA urges the Subcommittee to continue its support for this critical activity, the research from which will help ensure that policies and investments made at U.S. schools to address the safety of students, teachers and administrators will be evidence-based.

² *Bringing People Into Focus: How Social, Behavioral and Economic Research Addresses National Challenges, National Science Foundation (NSF 13-62).*

³ *Ibid.*

BJS' national data collections play an important role in providing statistical evidence needed for criminal justice policy decision makers. In particular, these programs provide the critical data infrastructure supporting the Administration's commitment to focus on data-driven, evidence- and information-based, "smart on crime" approaches. COSSA supports the request for an additional \$1 million for the National Survey of Public Defenders and an additional \$1.5 million for the National Public Defenders Reporting Program. Further, we endorse the Administration's efforts to "explore the feasibility of statistical collections in important topical priority areas, including: recidivism and reentry, prosecution and adjudication, criminal justice data improvements and victimization statistics."

Increased investment in criminal justice science is needed to ensure future policies and decisions are evidence-based and to contain escalating costs associated with public safety. COSSA applauds NIJ's increased efforts to disseminate research results to practitioners, putting it in the hands of those who need it.

**Bureau of Economic Analysis
Department of Commerce**

COSSA urges the Subcommittee to appropriate \$107 million for the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce. This is equal to the amount included in the FY 2015 budget request. BEA plays a critical role in helping the nation understand our economy through the National Income and Product Accounts, which provides economic data at the national as well as industry levels, and other activities.

BEA proposes a new \$1.9 billion initiative in FY 2015, "Big Data for Small Business." This would allow BEA to create a new Small Business Gross Domestic Product to track the health of the U.S. small business sector, thereby addressing the need for more public data relating to small businesses.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views on behalf of the social and behavioral science community. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information.