



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

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COSSA Statement on the House FY 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (H.R. 2578)

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) thanks the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) for its long-established, bipartisan support of the National Science Foundation and basic scientific research. Unfortunately, under current circumstances, COSSA must oppose the fiscal year (FY) 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) appropriations bill (H.R. 2578) as passed by the House Appropriations Committee on May 20.

Among the many challenging provisions within the bill are a proposal to limit social science research support at the National Science Foundation (NSF), elimination of specific appropriations for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and inadequate funding for the Census Bureau and degradation of its American Community Survey (ACS).

Further, while we recognize that the *Budget Control Act* imposes caps on domestic discretionary spending that make it difficult to provide much needed investments in research, the bill does not go far enough to ensure U.S. global competitiveness in R&D. Due to looming sequestration cuts and the proposed reductions targeted at social science accounts within the bill, COSSA is forced to oppose the House FY 2016 CJS bill in its entirety.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION. While the House bill would provide a slight (0.7%) increase to NSF's overall budget in FY 2016, it seeks to prioritize funding for specific scientific fields at the expense of NSF's Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE) and Geosciences Directorate (GEO). SBE is NSF's smallest directorate, accounting for less than five percent of the entire NSF budget; however, it funds nearly 55 percent of all university-based basic social and behavioral science research in the United States. The House bill arbitrarily directs 70 percent of NSF's research funding to non-SBE and non-GEO sciences, thereby sidestepping NSF's gold-standard merit review system and ushering in a political process that picks winners and losers among the scientific disciplines.

Limiting U.S. investment in social and behavioral science research hampers our ability to understand how humans process information, make decisions, and communicate with one another and with technology. Federal investment in these sciences provides us with answers to complex, human-centered questions such as how to convince a community in the path of a tornado to heed warnings, or strategies for thwarting cybercrime and protecting citizens' privacy and security in an increasingly interconnected world. The cuts to SBE in the House bill are unfortunate and misguided.

JUSTICE RESEARCH PROGRAMS. The House CJS bill proposes to eliminate specific appropriations for base funding for the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. This seemingly innocuous change, which would make NIJ and BJS dependent solely on set-aside funds to be determined by the Department of Justice, would in practice place NIJ and BJS in direct competition with other DOJ programs for what are already scarce resources. If enacted, this language could realistically result in little to no base funding for NIJ or BJS in FY 2016, shutting off important research that informs evidence-based policy making on issues such as human trafficking, policing, children exposed to violence, incarceration alternatives, elder abuse, and reentry and

The Consortium of Social Science Associations is a nonprofit organization serving as a united voice for more than 100 professional associations, scientific societies, research centers and institutes, and colleges and universities who care about a robust social and behavioral scientific research enterprise.

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probation. Taken together, NIJ and BJS represent the only dedicated source of federal research support committed to enhancing our understanding of crime and the criminal justice system.

CENSUS BUREAU. The House CJS bill provides insufficient funding to the Census Bureau needed for the planning and execution of the 2020 Decennial Census. Further, the bill threatens the future of the American Community Survey (ACS), which is the nation's only source for high quality, comprehensive demographic and socio-economic data representing all communities in the U.S. Changes to the mandatory status of the ACS threaten the future quality and reliability of data that inform decisions such as how communities plan for improvements to roads and highways; assessing the supply of affordable housing options; planning for the health care, educational or job training needs of veterans; or helping a company to choose where to open a business. Underfunding the Census Bureau and the ACS will have a direct impact on the more than \$415 billion in annual federal assistance to states and localities that these data inform.

COSSA urges Members of Congress to oppose the FY 2016 House CJS Appropriations bill in its current form.

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