



CONSORTIUM *of* SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS

Analysis of the FY 2017 Senate Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill | April 22, 2016

On April 21, the Senate Appropriations Committee [approved](#) the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations Bill. This bill serves as the vehicle for annual appropriations for the National Science Foundation (NSF), Census Bureau, National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and countless other federal departments and agencies. The next step for the CJS bill is consideration on the Senate floor, which has not yet been scheduled.

At a Glance...

- **The Senate bill would provide NSF with a total budget of \$7.5 billion in FY 2017, flat with the FY 2016 enacted level.** Most notably the Senate bill does not include language singling out social science (or any other scientific disciplines) for cuts or preferential treatment, as we saw last year in the House bill. However, there is language calling on NSF to include criteria in its merit review process considering a project's potential for advancing U.S. "national security and economic interests."
- **NIJ and BJS would be held flat for another year at \$36 million and \$41 million, respectively.** The report includes language requiring the Department of Justice to submit a spend plan to Congress before obligating any funds appropriated to NIJ or BJS, consistent with previous bills.
- **The Census Bureau would receive an increase, but not the amount requested by the Administration for the continued ramp up to the 2020 Decennial Census.** However, language pertaining to the American Community Survey reinforces the importance of the survey and the Senate Appropriations Committee's support.

The FY 2017 appropriations process is now in full swing. Policy makers will be working over the next few months to get as many of the 12 annual spending bills passed before Congress shuts down for the party conventions in July. Breaking with tradition, the Senate has been moving more quickly than the House, becoming the first of the chambers to have legislation readied for floor consideration (the FY 2017 Energy-Water bill); spending bills typically originate in the House.

As COSSA has been [reporting](#), House and Senate budget leaders have been struggling to come to agreement on overall discretionary funding for FY 2017, despite an [agreement](#) in October 2015 that set a top-line budget for FY 2017. Conservatives in the House remain displeased with the fall deal, suggesting that it spends too much; they would prefer that discretionary spending in FY 2017 be capped at the amount negotiated in the 2011 budget agreement (which brought us the subsequent draconian cuts known as sequestration). However, House appropriators have decided to proceed despite not having a budget resolution and have begun marking up their bills, including the [Agriculture spending bill](#) earlier this week. The House has not yet released its version of the CJS appropriations bill.

In a rare display of unity, both parties in the House and Senate have rejected President Obama’s attempt to infuse new, one-time mandatory funding into the NSF and other research agency budgets (read [COSSA’s analysis of the President’s FY 2017 budget request](#) for a refresher); Congress is not in a position—given current budget and partisan challenges—to enact legislation authorizing new mandatory spending. Instead, House and Senate appropriators are writing their FY 2017 bills with mandatory funding completely off the table. Therefore, the comparisons made throughout this report are to the *discretionary* amounts requested by the President, not the total amount that assumes new mandatory spending.

Summarized below are the Senate Appropriations Committee’s proposals for the National Science Foundation, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Census Bureau.

The Committee’s full report can be found [here](#), and audio of the mark up is posted on the Committee [website](#).

National Science Foundation

The Senate CJS bill would provide nearly flat funding for NSF in FY 2017 at \$7.51 billion, which is an increase of 0.6 percent over the FY 2016 enacted level and 0.7 percent below the discretionary amount provided for NSF in the President’s request. Recall that the President was seeking one-time mandatory funding for NSF in the amount of \$400 million, for a total proposed NSF budget of nearly \$8 billion for next year. The discretionary budget for NSF proposed by the Administration was \$7.64 billion.

Nearly all of the proposed increase in the Senate bill would go toward major research construction and facilities costs. The Research and Related Activities account, which funds NSF’s six research directorates, would be flat funded at \$6 billion; the Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR) would also be flat at \$880 million. While flat funding is disappointing, a positive element in the Senate bill is that it does not include report language targeting the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE)—or any other directorate—for cuts, which is something COSSA has been [fighting](#) in the House. Instead, the Senate report maintains the Appropriations Committee’s support for NSF as a funder of “research and education in all major scientific and engineering disciplines...”

The Senate proposal is not completely void of political intervention, though. Buried in the report is language stating:

*“The Committee has long been supportive of NSF’s peer review process to identify and recommend funding for scientifically meritorious research. NSF’s ability to fund cutting-edge research helps keep the country at the forefront of research across all scientific disciplines, which in turn builds the technological capabilities that underpin economic growth and prosperity. **As part of the peer review process, NSF should include criteria that evaluates how a proposal will advance our Nation’s national security and economic interests, as well as promote the progress of science and innovation in the United States.**”*

While not specific to social and behavioral science, this language is reminiscent of—though potentially much less damaging than—language in the final FY 2013 appropriations bill that limited NSF’s Political Science Program by requiring that all projects funded by the program “promote the national security or the economic interests of the United States.” In contrast, the Senate language directs NSF to add these criteria as part of the merit review process when reviewing *all* NSF grants, but does not appear to require that all projects funded by NSF necessarily have a direct positive impact on U.S. national security or the

economy. It is unclear how this language would be interpreted by NSF should a version of it stick in the final FY 2017 appropriations bill.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2016	Proposed FY 2017	FY 2017 Senate	Senate vs. FY 2016	Senate vs. Request
National Science Foundation	7463.5	7564.0	7509.8	0.6%	-0.7%
Research and Related Activities	6033.6	6079.43	6033.6	0.0%	-0.8%
Education and Human Resources	880.0	898.87	880.0	0.0%	-2.1%
Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction	200.3	193.12	246.6	23.1%	27.7%
Agency Operations and Award Management	330.0	373.02	330.0	0.0%	-11.5%
National Science Board	4.4	4.38	4.4	0.0%	-0.2%
Office of the Inspector General	15.2	15.2	15.2	0.3%	0.0%

National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics

The Senate bill would provide NIJ and BJS with \$36 million and \$41 billion, respectively, for FY 2017, representing another year of flat funding for the agencies. In addition, the report includes the following language:

“The Department [of Justice] shall submit to the [Appropriations] Committee as part of its spending plan... a plan for the use of all funding administered by the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics, respectively, for approval by the Committee prior to the obligation of any such funds.”

It is important to note that this language is not new, having been included in the Senate bill for the last several years.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2016	Proposed FY 2017	FY 2017 Senate	Senate vs. FY 2016	Senate vs. Request
Bureau of Justice Statistics	41.0	58.0	41.0	0.0%	-29.3%
National Institute of Justice	36.0	48.0	36.0	0.0%	-25.0%

Census Bureau

The Senate CJS bill includes \$1.52 billion for the Census Bureau for FY 2017, an increase of 11 percent over the FY 2016 level, but 7 percent below the amount requested by the President. Within the total is flat funding for the Current Surveys and Programs activity but a 13.6 percent increase for the Periodic Censuses and Programs line, which is where funding for the 2020 Decennial Census sits. Regarding the 2020 Decennial, the Senate report reads:

“The Census Bureau is directed to prioritize spending for activities that have the greatest potential to reduce cost and risk for the 2020 Census. Controlling costs for the 2020 Decennial Census remains a top oversight concern for the Committee. The Bureau shall continue to work to bring down the cost of the 2020 Decennial Census to a level less than the 2010 Census, not adjusting for inflation.”

The report further mentions the Bureau’s plans to utilize existing administrative records to reduce “unnecessary and costly duplication” of data.

The Senate report includes very positive language about the American Community Survey (ACS), reiterating the Appropriations Committee’s support for the survey as “often the primary or only source of data available to States, localities, and Federal agencies that need adequate information on a wide range of topics, including the needs of veterans, retirees, and familiars with school-age children...” The report goes on to direct the Bureau to continue to identify ways to reduce the number of questions included in the ACS and address concerns about its obtrusiveness.

<i>(in millions)</i>	Enacted FY 2016	Proposed FY 2017	FY 2017 Senate	Senate vs. FY 2016	Senate vs. Request
Bureau of the Census	1370.0	1633.6	1518.3	10.8%	-7.1%
Current Surveys and Programs	270.0	285.3	270.0	0.0%	-5.4%
Periodic Censuses and Programs	1100.0	1348.3	1248.3	13.5%	-7.4%

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