

# COSSA WASHINGTON UPDATE

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## **CONGRESS PASSES SWEEPING BUDGET CUTS** *HS*

As the first month of the new fiscal year comes to a close, the Congress has taken a giant step toward the goal of balancing the budget by 2002. Both the House and Senate have passed budget reconciliation bills. To balance the budget, this legislation reduces spending for domestic programs, makes major changes to Medicare and Medicaid, alters student loan programs, turns other federal programs over to the States to decide how to run, decreases taxes, and eliminates the Department of Commerce. However, since the House and Senate have passed different versions of the legislation, a conference committee must work out the differences. President Clinton continues to threaten to veto the bill, saying it cuts too much in education and training, and health.

The thirteen appropriations bills also continue to lurch forward toward some conclusion. The President has signed two into law (Agriculture and Military Construction), and one has been vetoed (Legislative Branch). Conferees have reached agreement on two that the President will likely sign (Energy & Water, and Transportation). Two conference reports have been rejected by the House (Defense and Interior) and are now in the process of renegotiation. Two conference reports are going to the floors of both Houses with disagreements (Treasury and Foreign Operations). The Treasury bill has the House fighting to retain the Istook Amendment that would limit advocacy by non-profits and the Foreign Operations bill includes a House provision prohibiting funding for any organization that provides abortions overseas. A Presidential veto hangs over both bills if these provisions are not removed.

Two bills are at the staff negotiation conference stage. The VA, HUD, Independent Agencies bill, that includes funding for the National Science Foundation, faces a threatened Presidential veto unless funding can be found for the Corporation for National Service and the House's prohibitions against certain EPA activities are not removed. The funding for national service can come from altering the funding decisions already made, in which case NSF could get hurt, or more

dollars could be given to the Subcommittee through some budget endgame where money could be transferred from Defense.

The President has threatened a veto of the Commerce, Justice, State bill without the restoration of funding for community policing and certain programs in the Commerce Department.

Two bills have not been passed by one of the chambers. The massive Labor, Health and Human Services, Education bill may finally reach the floor of the Senate this week. The President has vowed to veto the bill unless cuts the House made to job training and education programs are reinstated. The DC appropriations bill still faces House floor action.

The President and the new majority in Congress continue to challenge and taunt each other while the need to increase the debt ceiling looms just weeks away. All the bluster of confrontation and the occasional hints of cooperation eventually must give way to solutions, at least for the short-term.

## **THE PERILOUS FEDERAL ROLE IN DATA COLLECTION AND STATISTICS** *HS*

Three events held during the week of October 23 demonstrated the perilous future for data collection, analysis and dissemination by the federal government. The first was a hearing on October 25 before the House Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs and Criminal Justice that

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examined preparations and plans for Census 2000. The second, a conference sponsored by the Population Resource Center on October 27 celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the President's Commission on Population and its implications for today. Finally, that same day the sixty-eighth meeting of the Committee on National Statistics of the National Academy of Sciences heard about the devastating effects of budget cuts on the federal statistical system and one plan for improving the system. All three events emphasized a growing sense that although this may be the "information age," the role of the federal government in systematically collecting data for use by policymakers and the public faces limitations.

### "Mortgaging the Future"

In 1981 the Reagan administration arrived and in its early budgets proceeded to decimate the federal statistical system, significantly reducing funding. Former Bureau of Labor Statistics Commissioner Janet Norwood, a member of CNSTAT, told its meeting of the devastating impact those cuts had on the ability of the system to conduct research to improve data collection methodology and other issues that continue to plague federal statistical agencies today. While the problems were identified, Norwood said, there was just no funding to fix them. The future was mortgaged in those days to pay for tax cuts and a defense buildup.

Today, budgets are being cut again, this time to balance the budget in seven years. And although, as

Norwood noted, "every data set is useful to someone," the federal statistical agencies face another round of program, and in some cases, staff reductions. Once again, the statistical system will lose data series and the ability to move toward correcting some of its deficiencies.

The directors of the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the Commissioner of Labor Statistics discussed the impact of the potential cuts (none of their FY 1996 budgets are final, but they all face significant reductions). For Martha Riche, head of the Census Bureau, the reductions would probably force further postponement of the initiative to improve economic statistics (once known as the Boskin Initiative), a further deferral of equipment modernization, the elimination of surveys affecting migrant workers, and a shelving of the plans to increase the sample size for the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). In addition, the Census of Agriculture could face serious examination regarding its direction and continuation. Riche said budget cuts would bring a "retreat to the core."

Acting BEA chief Stephen Landefeld suggested that although the cuts would be significant, work on improving the national accounts would continue. Plans to re-engineer the computer system would be put on hold and some surveys such as those that measure pollution abatement control spending could be lost. In addition, BEA faces staff reductions and furloughs.

BLS Commissioner Katharine Abraham noted that her agency has faced a stagnation of resources for some time. She asked whether in an extended period of uncertainty, where your appropriation bill has not made it to the Senate floor yet leaving the possibility of a full-year continuing resolution, how do you avoid dismantling programs? Assuming the worst case scenario, Abraham suggested probable coping strategies could include: reducing the sample size for the Current Population Survey, eliminating monthly state-by-state data for the 11 largest states, ending the Export-Import Price program and the Occupational Projection program, and jettisoning all non-economic data collections. Asked specifically about the National Longitudinal Survey of Labor Market Experiences, Abraham called it of "fundamental long-term importance," and although not on the elimination list, the NLS may need to defer collecting data for a year.

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### Combining Federal Statistical Agencies?

One solution to the difficulties facing these three agencies has been devised by Rep. Steven Horn (R-CA), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information, and Technology. On October 25, Horn introduced legislation, H.R. 2521, to combine the BLS, BEA and Census Bureau into a Federal Statistical Service (FSS).

The bill is somewhat predicated on the abolition of the Commerce Department. If Commerce was abolished, Census and BEA would be left as orphans. The reconciliation bill calls for BEA to go to BLS, and Census to spend a year in the Office of Management and Budget, and then move to BLS, unless other arrangements are made. Horn's bill provides these other arrangements.

Action on the bill could proceed without the elimination of the Department because as one of its purpose statements notes: "a more centralized statistical system is integral to efficiency leading to integration of research, methodology, survey design, and the taking advantage of economies of scale." The bill also seeks to strengthen the office of the Chief Statistician, now housed in the Office of Management and Budget, and encourages sharing confidential data for statistical purposes within the FSS and with State agencies.

The proposed legislation also creates a Federal Council on Statistical Policy to establish a government-wide statistical policy.

### Measuring Block Grants

In addition to the lack of money, the system faces the problem of figuring out how to assess the devolution of programs to the states. As Congress proceeds to create block grants that allow for State flexibility in providing benefits to its citizens, how does a federal statistical system, with decreasing budgets, measure the impact of different programs across 50 states?

One attempt will be to extend SIPP, a provision included in the legislation transferring the welfare system to the States. The welfare reform legislation includes \$10 million to allow SIPP to provide state level data and to evaluate how the block grant is

working. Members of CNSTAT asked, with each State crafting its own welfare program, will SIPP need 50 different questionnaires and how would comparability be achieved?

### 25 Years of Population Shifts

The significance of all these issues and problems was highlighted at the PRC conference. Looking back at the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, participants noted the difficulties facing the nation and the continued need to measure progress in overcoming them. The Commission, established in 1970, focused on population growth and how to slow it, immigration (albeit only slightly), reproductive choice and child care (issues then-President Nixon did not welcome), and "establishing a statistics and research base." The Commission recommended that: "the federal government move promptly and boldly to strengthen the basic statistics and research upon which all sound demographic, social and economic policy must ultimately depend..." Charles Westoff, Executive Director of the Commission, told the conference that he believed the report's legacy was increased research on the economic and environmental consequences of population growth.

Keynoting the conference, Rep. Tom Sawyer (D-OH), defined the fundamental issue of our day as the conflict between older, more stable and wealthy individuals and societies and younger, more mobile, less wealthy individuals and societies. This conflict has created geographic and generational conflict, Sawyer said. Calling demography a prism through which we examine the world, Sawyer noted that how we measure race, how we define poverty and how we define the service sector of the economy are key issues for demographers and statisticians.

Rep. Anthony Beilenson (D-CA) raised the specter of the almost doubling of the population of California by 2020 and asked whether the United States can respond to massive demographic changes on the horizon? To answer this question, Beilenson has introduced legislation calling for the creation of a new commission on population.

Census Bureau Director Martha Riche compared the general picture of the U.S. population from 25 years ago, now, and into the foreseeable future. The aging of the population, the increasing diversity, the

impact of immigration, and the affect of education and income inequality, reflected the changes in the past quarter-century. Riche mentioned the enhancement of inter-generational conflict that varied from State-to-State and the impact of these changes for policymakers at the local level as the results of these population shifts.

Cynthia Tauber of the Census Bureau filled in the details on the aging issue, in particular noting the continued growth of the oldest old and the increasing reality of the four generation family. Reynolds Farley of the University of Michigan focused on racial and ethnic diversity, highlighting the continued differences between blacks and whites, despite progress on civil rights and integration, and the increasing Hispanic and Asian populations, which will make African-Americans a minority of minorities in the near distant future. He also noted the increasing difficulty of defining "race," a task OMB is now studying (see *Update*, September 11). Jeff Passel of the Urban Institute reviewed changes in immigration patterns during the past 25 years, with the significant increases from Asian and Latin American countries, particularly Mexico. He also noted the attempts at legislative changes during this time period and the current attempts to once again limit new arrivals. Finally, Margaret Simms of the Joint Center on Political and Economic Studies examined the changes in education and income levels emphasizing the decreases in dropout rates and increases in high school completions among African Americans, yet the continuing income disparities among the races.

### 2000 Census Planning Faces Scrutiny *MB*

At an October 25 House hearing, the Commerce Department Inspector General and the Director of the Census Bureau presented divergent views on the planning and design of the 2000 census. The hearing, convened by the House Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, International Affairs and Criminal Justice, was the first held by the panel, which under congressional reorganization, now has jurisdiction on this issue. Before the GOP takeover of Congress, a census and statistics panel gave regular, in-depth attention to the federal statistical system.

Subcommittee chair William H. Zeff (R-NH) began the hearing by noting that he and others had much to learn about the decennial census, and that the

session would be for informational purposes only. Alluding to the political dynamics involved with the census, he said, "I want to direct the witnesses and members to the nuts and bolts of the census process -- to the methodology, how it works, and what it costs. The rest we will address later."

Commenting that "the entire process is moving in fits and starts," Commerce Department Inspector General Frank DeGeorge said that the 2000 Census -- which he termed the largest peacetime mobilization in history -- is being hindered by faulty planning and design selection.

DeGeorge agreed with the Bureau that some form of sampling for non-response follow-up is needed to address issues of declining accuracy and rising costs, however he said that the current design is "unsubstantiated and tested, vulnerable to cost growth...[and] statistically inferior." The Bureau's plans to count the initial 90 percent of the population, augmented by using of administrative records, and use a 1-percent sample of the entire population to represent the last 10 percent "may introduce statistical uncertainty." "At 90 percent, the people who have not yet responded are the hardest to count, so a disproportionate number of them will be represented in the sample, possibly leading to missing information and thus introducing statistical bias."

The Inspector General said that the Bureau rejected a method that he said would cost less (\$3 billion vs. the current projection of \$3.9 billion) and would be statistically superior. The alternative begins sampling for non-response immediately after the return of mailed-back forms, of which the Bureau expects a 66.9 percent rate. Using a larger sample size, this method would sample one in three once a 70 percent count is achieved, rather than the current one in ten. In a procedure known as differential sampling, the sample size would be set by area need. DeGeorge said that the Bureau rejected this idea because they did not believe they could sell it to interested parties.

L. Nye Stevens of the General Accounting Office testified to the importance of congressional leadership on this issue. "The window of opportunity for Congress to provide guidance on those decisions and on their funding is closing. The further the Bureau proceeds with its decisions, the less Congress will be able to affect the census without significant risk of wasted expenditures and unacceptable risks," he said.

Appearing after DeGeorge and Stevens, Census Bureau Director Martha Riche gave an overview of the Bureau's efforts to achieve a survey that she said will be "simpler, cheaper, and more accurate." Much of Riche's remarks were based on preliminary findings of the 1995 Census Test conducted in Oakland, Paterson (NJ), and six parishes in northwest Louisiana. Riche said that the 2000 census will be based on four objectives: simple, easy to read forms; an open process that diverse groups and interests can understand and support; and end to the differential undercount of racial and ethnic groups; and a "one number" census that does not need to be revised.

Discussing the use of sampling, Riche said, "we learned from the 1995 test that sampling may not just be an attractive, cost-saving option -- it may be the only option we now have" given fiscal and logistical realities. This year's test used a method known as Integrated Coverage Measurement (ICM) to achieve an accurate count. Evaluations, she said, are underway of 1995 ICM estimates as part of the 2000 planning. Riche also warned that reduced appropriations for the Bureau would prevent improvements in the census since the 1990 survey.

In response to a question from Chairman Zelif, Riche did not choose either the 70 or 90 percent options, saying that research is ongoing and she hoped to make a decision in six months. Zelif raised the possibility of the survey being conducted by the Postal Service, States, or the private sector. Riche rejected these ideas, saying that the Postal Service is not interested because of the size of the task, private sector groups that have been contacted have declined out of logistics and questions regarding profit, and States and local governments may have conflicts of interests. Riche gave an example of the latter, saying that responses rates may suffer if residents of a house are uncomfortable allowing a firefighter into the house if there are wiring or other safety problems visible.

## **NSF PANEL LOOKS AT STATE OF SBE DIRECTORATE** *HS*

The Advisory Committee to the National Science Foundation's Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate met on October 19-20. The meeting focused on reviewing the congressional session and its impact on SBE, a roundtable on outreach and education, a special presentation by a

National Medal of Science winner, and discussion of NSF's attempt to comply with the Government Performance Results Act.

The 14 member committee, chaired by Jacquelynne Eccles, Professor of Psychology at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, also heard Anne Petersen, NSF's Deputy Director, describe how the current budgetary situation could lead to "new opportunities" for NSF. She was most concerned, however, that budget cuts not create turf wars among disciplines, citing the need to "maintain the entire enterprise." She also admitted that reduced funding for other research agencies might lead to increased pressure on NSF to make up the gaps. In response to Committee members interest in organizational issues, Petersen noted that NSF would be examining its entire structure, not simply responding to the House of Representatives reauthorization bill directive to reduce the number of directorates.

The Committee heard Joel Widder, Deputy Director of NSF's Office of Legislative and Public Affairs, and David Goldston, Legislative Director for Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), discuss pending congressional budget activity as one full of uncertainty, and that NSF's relative good fortune in the FY 1996 funding game may be sacrificed to ensure passage of appropriations bills President Clinton could sign. Goldston also noted that next year would be much more difficult, suggesting that scientists "slipped through the budget grinder" this year. He also exhorted scientists to educate new Members, particularly back in their home districts. In response to a question concerning how to persuade congressional staff of the value of science, and in particular the social and behavioral sciences, Goldston claimed that better undergraduate teaching was the key since most staff are exposed to science at that educational level.

The Education and Outreach Roundtable discussion featured: Howard J. Silver, COSSA's Executive Director; Julia Moore, Director of NSF's Office of Legislative and Public Affairs; David Johnson, Executive Director of the Federation of Behavioral, Psychological and Cognitive Sciences; and Daryl Chubin, Director of Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication Division in NSF's Education and Human Resources Directorate. All the speakers recommended that SBE needs improvement

in this area. Recommendations included the need to define and differentiate audiences, determine what SBE's products are, ascertain the best mechanisms for communicating its successes, and calculate how to overcome difficulties such as the complexity of the research results. Silver spoke of the importance of making the research connection when providing information to policymakers. Chubin provided examples of EHR's communication efforts through multiple media.

### **SHEPARD RECEIVES SCIENCE MEDAL**

Roger N. Shepard, Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Stanford University, was named by President Clinton as one of eight scientists to receive the National Medal of Science. (*see next story*) Shepard, with the medal dangling from his neck, spoke to the advisory committee on his research about the science of imagery. He provided the audience many illustrations of how people perceive images and transform objects. Studying those perceptions helps uncover universal principles of how the mind works.

Susan Cozzens, Director of NSF's Office of Policy Support, presented NSF's preliminary attempts to respond to the provisions of the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). This act, passed by the Congress, requires federal agencies to focus on outcomes and achievements. For a federal agency that supports basic research whose payoffs may never happen or will occur in the future, this is a complicated task. Cozzens described how NSF intends to utilize results oriented management to define performance. She hoped that NSF could develop indicators that would move beyond quantitative measures and provide more useful indicators of success.

### **CLINTON AWARDS SCIENCE MEDALS; WARNS OF GOP SCIENCE CUTS**

In an October 18 White House ceremony, President Clinton awarded 8 individuals with the National Medal of Science, the nation's highest scientific honor.

Clinton said that the recipients' "spark of geniuses lighted the landscape of human knowledge and pushed back the shrouds of ignorance." The President went

on to say, "In a year when seven of nine Nobel Laureates for science and mathematics were Americans, we can feel assured that our scientific leadership is unchallenged. We can also feel proud that everyone of these Nobel Prize winners has been supported in their research efforts by the United States government."

Clinton went on to criticize Republican budget plans under consideration on Capitol Hill that would "cut vital research and development by a third," particularly technology programs supported by the Administration. Discussing these budget plans, he said, "We could have a balanced budget to show for it tomorrow, but a decade or a generation from now our nation will be much the poorer for doing that... it is tempting to cut other things without considering what the consequences are, including investments in science and technology which may not have the biggest lobby here in Washington."

### **SENATE TO EXAMINE BILL THAT WOULD HARM RESEARCH ON MINORS**

On November 9, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), will hold a hearing on the Family Privacy Act of 1995, (H.R. 1271). The bill was overwhelmingly approved by the House in April.

H.R. 1271 would require absolute prior written consent from parents before minors can participate in federally-funded survey research. The bill is a part of the Republican *Contract with America*. The legislation would apply to all federally-funded entities, including States, cities, universities and research institutions.

The bill, as originally introduced, would require explicit written parental permission for eight categories of research questions involving minors. (*see Update*, March 20) Following a hearing by the House Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology, the House subcommittee deleted the mandated prior written parental consent provision. (*see Update*, April 3) The full House of Representatives, however, subsequently voted to restore the provision. Freshman Mark Souder (R-IN), author of the amendment which restored the written mandate provision, acknowledged that his

amendment would hurt research but felt that it was necessary to "safeguard family privacy unless and until the government has a legitimate reason to intrude upon it." (see *Update*, April 24)

The Research and Privacy Coalition (representing over 35 organizations including COSSA) has been working to educate Senate Governmental Affairs Committee members of the deleterious effects of H.R. 1271 as passed by the House. In a letter to members of the Committee, the Coalition expressed its grave concerns regarding H.R. 1271, saying that while

protecting family privacy is "an admirable goal, the bill has the potential to undermine current research on such important issues as substance abuse, violence, and adolescent pregnancy, without necessarily providing ANY additional protection to the privacy of families." The letter further states that "clearly survey research provides valuable information relied upon by educators, families, policymakers, health care providers, and private sector groups. It is difficult to imagine trying to respond to many of the threats facing our youth without accurate, reliable survey data."

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## SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE *ke*

COSSA provides this information as a service and encourages readers to contact the agency for further information or application materials. Additional application guidelines and restrictions may apply.

### Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

Applications are invited for FY 1996 competitive grants in agricultural, forest and related environmental sciences under the National Competitive Research Initiative Grants Program administered by the Competitive Research Grants and Awards Management Division, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

**Project Types:** *Conventional Projects* -- (a) Standard Research Grants: Research will be supported that is fundamental or mission-linked, conducted by individual investigators, co-investigators within the same discipline, or multidisciplinary teams. (b) Conferences: Scientific meetings that bring together scientists to identify research needs, update information, or advance an area of research are recognized as integral parts of research efforts. *Agricultural Research Enhancement Awards* -- In order to contribute to the enhancement of research capabilities in the research program areas described herein, applications are solicited for Agricultural Research Enhancement Awards for post-doctoral fellowships, new investigators, and for EPSCOR eligible states.

**Eligible Participants:** Applications may be submitted by any State agricultural experiment station, college, university, other research institution or organization, Federal agency, private organization, corporation, or individual.

**Budget:** Funds available for Markets, Trade, and Rural Development are expected to be close to \$4 million for FY 1996.

**Deadline:** Applications must be postmarked by January 29, 1996 for the Markets & Trade area and February 12, 1996 for Rural Development agencies.

**Contact:** For information and an application kit contact: Proposal Services Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, AG Box 2245, Washington, DC 20250-2245; telephone (202) 401-5048.

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