

**PREWITT NOMINATED TO HEAD CENSUS;
FACES EARLY CRITICISM FROM MILLER** *DH*

On June 23, President Clinton sent to the Senate Kenneth Prewitt's nomination as the next director of the Census Bureau. If confirmed by the Senate, Prewitt would fill the position that has been vacant since Martha Farnsworth Riche resigned from the post in January. James Holmes, Atlanta regional director, has been serving as acting director. Only several hours after the announcement, Prewitt received a not-so-warm welcome from the Representative Dan Miller (R-FL), chairman of the House Oversight Committee's Subcommittee on the Census.

Prewitt, instrumental in the creation of COSSA in the early 1980s, is currently the president of the Social Science Research Council in New York City. He was formerly a senior vice president of the Rockefeller Foundation and head of the University of Chicago's highly regarded National Opinion Research Center. Despite Prewitt's experience and impeccable record as a social scientist and an administrator, Miller questioned Prewitt's ability to head the Census Bureau and criticized Clinton for choosing an "academic" to head the Bureau

On the House floor on June 23, Miller delivered a speech criticizing the nomination, saying, "The Census Bureau needs a General Schwarzkopf, not a professor Sherman Klunk, to save the census." Earlier in the week, when word leaked that Prewitt was definitely Clinton's choice, Miller called Prewitt a "statistical shill for [the Clinton administration's] beleaguered statistical estimation scheme that has brought the 2000 census to the brink of disaster."

Prewitt did receive support from the ranking minority member of the House Subcommittee on the Census. Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), in response to Miller's criticism, spoke in favor of Prewitt, whom she said had "a long a distinguished career as an administrator and researcher." She said he was "highly regarded by his colleagues for his scholarship

and professionalism." Prewitt said he planned to work with the Congress "to see if we can't depoliticize the debate" around Census 2000.

The first step in Prewitt's confirmation process will be a hearing before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, chaired by Senator Fred Thompson (R-TN).

**NSF RECEIVES BOOST FROM HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS PANEL** *HS*

On June 25, the House Appropriations Committee marked up the VA, HUD Independent Agencies appropriations bill. During the session the committee approved an amendment sponsored by Reps. Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) and Mark Neumann (R-WI) to increase the ceiling on FHA loans. This will generate new revenue from origination fees. The committee decided that the beneficiaries of the new money should be the National Science Foundation's Research and Related Activities account, adding \$70 million, and the Veterans' Medical Care research account, adding \$10 million.

With effective advocacy by the scientific community including COSSA, the Coalition for National Science Funding, university groups, and others, and with encouragement from House Speaker

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Newt Gingrich (R-GA), who recently called for a doubling of science funding in 8 years, the amendment passed without any fuss.

The result of this action leaves the NSF's FY 1999 recommended appropriation from the House at \$3.697 billion. This is \$267 million or 8 percent above the FY 1998 level, \$53 million more than the Senate, and \$76 million less than the President's request.

The Research and Related Activities increase over FY 1998 becomes \$269 million or 10.6 percent, to a total of \$2.815 billion. Only \$32 million less than the President's request, the House number is \$90 million more than the Senate's recommendation. The House Committee protects the requested FY 1999 increases for earth sciences, ocean sciences, and atmospheric sciences.

The report accompanying the bill will include language supporting the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences Directorate. It will also include language reiterating the commitment of the Congress to a Science and Technology Centers (STCs) competition that uses criteria to maintain a meritorious and inclusive competition. This offsets Senate report language limiting competition for three new applied molecular biology STCs to those universities not in the top 100 recipients of federal funds for research.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), an advocacy organization for federal support for the social and behavioral sciences, was founded in 1981 and stands alone in Washington in representing the full range of social and behavioral sciences. *UPDATE* is published 22 times per year. Individual subscriptions are available from COSSA for \$65; institutional subscriptions, \$130, overseas mail, \$130. ISSN 0749-4394. Address all inquiries to COSSA, 1522 K Street, NW, Suite 836, Washington, D.C. 20005. Phone: (202) 842-3525, Fax: (202) 842-2788.

For Education and Human Resources, the Committee is providing a total of \$642.5 million, \$10 million more than FY 1998, but down \$40 million from the request and the Senate number. The House has increased funding above the request for informal science education (\$5 million) and minority graduate education (\$7.5 million).

Both the House and Senate bills will head to the floor when Congress returns from its Independence Day recess. The Senate is scheduled to return on July 7. The House on July 14.

APPROPRIATIONS BILL FAVORS MED RESEARCH AND CUTS ED RESEARCH *AS*

"Reflecting an ongoing commitment to medical research," the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee approved a sizeable increase for the National Institutes of Health. The Subcommittee's generosity, however, did not reach the Department of Education's Office of Education Research and Improvement (OERI), the agency charged with providing education research and program development. OERI funding was cut by the Subcommittee.

NIH Receives Boost

The Subcommittee provided the National Institutes of Health (NIH) \$14.862 billion in funding for FY 1999, a 9.1 percent or \$1.24 billion increase over the FY 1998 level and \$99 million over the President's request.

The Committee also provided \$2.586 billion to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an increase of \$202 million over the FY 1998 funding level and \$89 million over the President's request. This sum includes a \$70.4 million increase for chronic and environmental disease and an \$11.6 million increase for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

No Funds for Administration's Research Initiative DH

The Subcommittee provided no funds for the Administration's Interagency Research Initiative. President Clinton had proposed \$75 million for education research focused on technology, \$50 million for the Department of Education and \$25 million for the National Science Foundation. The Subcommittee did provide the administration's requested level, the same as FY 1998 funding, for OERI's research institutes (\$53.8 million), regional labs (\$56 million), and dissemination (\$18.8 million). It also provided the \$9 million increase requested for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). In addition, the Subcommittee provided \$40 million for the National Assessment of Education Programs (NAEP), meeting the Administration's request.

HOUSE PASSES AGRICULTURE FUNDING BILL: REFUSES TO FUND NEW PROGRAM HS

The House of Representatives passed its version of the FY 1999 Agricultural and Rural Development appropriations bill on June 24. The Senate version still awaits floor action. The House bill (H.R. 4101) contains no allocation for the Fund for Rural America (FRA) or the new Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems. The Senate appropriations committee bill contains no funds for the FRA, but funds the new initiative at \$120 million (see *UPDATE*, June 15, 1998)

An amendment sponsored by Rep. Cal Dooley (D-CA) to take \$49.6 million from the Special Grants account and allocate it to the new initiative failed on the House floor by a voice vote. Dooley argued that the House only weeks earlier had authorized spending for the new program in the agriculture research bill. The defeat of the Dooley amendment and the zero funding for the Fund for Rural America indicates once again the difference between authorization and appropriation bills.

Unlike the Senate and the administration's request, the House continues to consolidate all studies and evaluation work on the food stamp, child nutrition

and WIC programs in the Economic Research Service (ERS). Thus, the funding for these studies is included in the House allocation for ERS of \$67.3 million. The Senate appropriations committee provided only \$53.1 million for ERS, but they transferred \$18.5 million to the Food and Nutrition Service for the studies and evaluations noted above. Thus, in essence, the House is providing a reduced appropriation for the core programs of ERS. The House includes \$704,000 for an analysis of the needs of small farmers and "other casualties of an industrializing agricultural sector," an electric utility deregulation analysis, and an analysis on estimating the benefits of food safety. It is also very interested in a study of "plate waste" in the school lunch program.

The House provided \$105.1 million for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), a \$13 million decrease below FY 1998, \$2.1 million less than the budget request, and a little over \$1 million more than the Senate committee appropriation. As in the Senate bill, the decrease occurs because the Census of Agriculture needs fewer funds in FY 1999 than it did in FY 1998 when most of the data collection occurred. Its FY 1999 funding will be \$23.6 million.

The House did provide a slight increase (\$2.35 million) over FY 1998 and the Senate committee recommendation for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants program, bringing it to a total of \$99.55 million. This is still a long way from the administration's request of \$130 million. The House, like the Senate, rejected the administration's request to reduce Hatch Act Formula Grant Payments by \$15 million. However, unlike the Senate panel which gave the program a \$5 million boost, the House did not increase funding over last year's level of \$168.7 million.

HUMANITIES ENDOWMENT LEVEL-FUNDED HS

Both the House and Senate appropriations committees provided the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) an allocation for FY 1999 of \$110.7 million, the same as FY 1998, but \$25.3 million below the President's request. Unlike previous years, NEH's future was not in doubt during

the Interior Subcommittee's markup. Indeed, even the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), NEH's much more controversial cousin, survived with a FY 1999 appropriation, after moderate Republicans in the House helped reverse, at the full Committee level, the subcommittee's decision to eliminate funding for NEA.

NEH's new Chairman, William Ferris, has proposed a new regional centers program. It is unclear from the committees' markup if the funding would be available, since Ferris has said that the program could only go forward with new funds. Since no new funds were appropriated so far, Ferris may have a difficult choice to make down the road.

The Interior and Related Agencies bill, which contains NEH funding, will reach the floor of both Houses of Congress after the July 4th recess. There are a number of provisions in the Senate committee bill that the White House has already objected to, offering the prospect of a possible veto come September or early October.

PANEL STUDY TO FOCUS ON JUVENILE CRIME

DIH

The National Research Council's (NRC) Committee on Law and Justice and Board on Children, Youth, and Families recently announced the formation of a new panel study on juvenile crime, entitled "Juvenile Crime: Prevention, Treatment and Control." The Committee and the Board, part of the NRC's Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, held its first meeting on June 23-24. The meeting allowed panel members to discuss plans for the upcoming study. The study was first called for by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Additional support for the study is being provided by the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program of the Department of Education and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The panel study will be conducted over a 24 month period, at which time the group will publish a paper with its findings. The panel will focus on the "causes and pathways to juvenile crime and violence;

assess the literature and data on the strengths and weaknesses of the juvenile justice system as an intervention and control process; examine the nature of the youth population within the juvenile justice system; and assess the literature on the short- and long-term effects of waiving juvenile cases to adult court." The panel plans to meet six times over the 24 month period, hold at least three workshops, and visit programs and facilities for juvenile offenders.

The panel will be co-chaired by Joan McCord, Department of Criminal Justice, Temple University, and Cathy Spatz Widom, Schools of Criminal Justice and Psychology, University of Albany, NY.

Additional information about the panel study can be obtained from the "Current Projects" section of the National Academy of Science's Internet Webpage: <http://www.nas.edu>.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS: A SYSTEM IN JEOPARDY?

AS

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Inspector General (IG) Office of Evaluation and Inspections (OEI) has released a four-volume final inspection report addressing the role of institutional review boards (IRBs) in protecting human subjects participating in clinical research. The summary report, *Institutional Review Boards: A Time for Reform*, summarizes the IG's findings and recommendations.

The report was the subject of a recent hearing by the Government Reform and Oversight Subcommittee on Human Resources, chaired by Representative Christopher Shays (R-CT). The focus of the hearing, stated Shays, was to ask "what steps must be taken to strengthen IRBs before the system is strained to the breaking point." Shays emphasized that while "today's research environment has changed dramatically," IRBs have not. "Complex science can pose subtle, yet profound, ethical questions about risk assessment and the ability of subjects to consent; questions beyond the capacity of altruistic, overworked, but ill-trained, IRB members."

Deputy Inspector General for Evaluation and Inspections George Grob explained to the

Subcommittee that the OEI "initiated the broad, systematic review in response to concerns raised in a prior Office of Inspector General study." OEI had six main findings:

- IRBs face major changes in the research environment;
- IRBs conduct minimal continuing review of approved research;
- IRBs review too much, too quickly, with too little expertise;
- Neither IRBs nor HHS devote much emphasis to evaluating IRB effectiveness;
- IRBs face conflicts that threaten their independence; and
- IRBs and their institutions provide little training for investigators and board members.

OEI also made several "strong recommendations" to the National Institutes of Health's Office of Protection for Research Risks (OPRR) and the Food and Drug Administration. The thrust of OEI's "recommendations is for a more streamlined approach to providing human-subject protections, both at the local and Federal levels." OEI also called for greater emphasis on accountability, performance, and results. OEI's recommendations include:

- Grant IRBs greater flexibility but hold them more accountable for results;
- Reengineer the Federal oversight process;
- Strengthen continuing protections for research subjects; and
- Enhance education for research investigators and IRB board members.

"We are always interested in improving the system to make research as safe as it possibly can be," testified Gary Ellis, Director of OPRR, Office of the Extramural Research, at the National Institutes of Health. Ellis told the Subcommittee that the "system of protection of human subjects in research is based

on a succession, or chain, of judgements made by people in the context of federal regulations. Thoughtful people, often volunteering large amounts of their time, look at research protocol and weigh the potential benefits."

Closing his testimony, Grob underscored that OEI "does not document, nor do we suggest that, widespread harm is being done to human subjects. The current system of protections is supported by many conscientious researchers committed to protecting human subjects and by many dedicated IRB members and staff doing their best under trying substances." He reiterated, however, "that the effectiveness of the current system of human-subject protections is in need of reform. . . We cannot afford to wait any longer to act. It is time for reform," he concluded.

Representative Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Ranking Minority Member of the Subcommittee, said that he will introduce legislation and "lead the fight to prevent racial targeting in unethical human behavioral drug studies." Towns declared, "It has been twenty years since a horrified nation learned of the Tuskegee Syphilis experiments. The IRB process was designed to assure that there would not be any more abuses like Tuskegee . . . We must take strong and decisive action to assure that the federal oversight process holds researchers and Institutional Review Boards accountable, especially where experiments are racially motivated or place children at risk without any possible benefit."

NBAC's Ongoing Work In Human Subjects Research

The President's National Bioethics Advisory Commission (NBAC) is currently "completing two projects relating to human subjects research ethics, both of which address, in part, Institutional Review Boards," testified Eric Meslin, Executive Director of NBAC.

Meslin said the first project "is examining issues in research involving persons with mental disorders that affect decision-making capacity" — a population that is felt by many to be "doubly vulnerable." According to Meslin, federal regulations do "not explicitly provide protections specific to the needs of

these individual." The most recent staff draft to the Commission, which Meslin hastened to add has not been adopted by NBAC as yet, proposed that the Common Rule should be amended to address a number of issues.

The Commission's second project pertains to developing recommendations for the research use of human biological materials. The Commission's research agenda also includes two other projects, "both of which will involve consideration of human subjects issues generally, and IRB issues in particular," said Meslin.

HOUSE PONDERES CREATION OF ALL-INCLUSIVE SCIENCE COMMITTEE *AS, HS*

Representative George Nethercutt (R-WA) speaking to lobbyists and advocates of biomedical and behavioral research funding at a recent Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding Policy breakfast, said that he could see the creation of a permanent Select Committee on Science Research and Human Health to look at NIH, NSF and the other research agencies. He further noted that he does not know if the Congress can double NIH's budget without doing the same for NSF.

Appointed by House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) to look at how the federal government funds research at its science agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and NASA, Nethercutt noted that he expected to issue a report next year.

His priorities are to: examine the peer review process; provide for the maximum coordination of the public/private scientific effort; review indirect costs; and examine basic research versus applied research and how that relates to "conservative" versus risky research.

In an era of budget surpluses, Nethercutt explained that there is an opportunity for Congress to provide evidence why doubling the nation's research budget can and should be a national priority. He also indicated that he will have to coordinate with the committee chairs who have jurisdiction over these agencies, including House Labor, Health and Human

Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee Chair John Porter (IL), House Health and Environment Subcommittee Chair Michael Bilirakis (FL) and House Science Committee Chair James Sensenbrenner (WI) to formalize the structure of his inquiry.

Prior to issuing the report he will hold hearings across the United States. He indicated that he has not yet talked with Leon Rosenberg, the chair of the Institute of Medicine's panel tasked with conducting a comprehensive study of the policies and processes used by [NIH] to determine funding allocation for biomedical research. (See *UPDATE*, April 20).

GRANTS TO DETECT FUTURE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS EARLY *HS*

In an attempt to pay as much attention to avoiding future problems as to controlling current ones, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Science to Achieve Results program (STAR) is soliciting proposals to identify possible future environmental problems and to develop approaches to solve them "before headlines have emerged." The EPA expects to have \$1 million in FY 1999 for these grants, with projects funded at up to \$150,000. *Detecting the Early Signals'* grants are to look ahead in two areas: the natural sciences and socio-economics.

In the socio-economics area projects should "examine changes in the way the U.S., industrialized nations, the world, in the next five to twenty years will think, do things, live, consume, invent, reproduce, etc., and what effects these changes will have on environmental problems, on our mind set, on how we handle them, on the tools we have to handle them, and on the costs and benefits of handling them." Examples could include changes in demographics, the economy, environmental values and land use.

Additional information can be gleaned from the EPA National Center for Environmental Research and Quality Assurance Web Page www.epa.gov/ncerqa. or by contacting Roger Cortesi 202/564-6852, cortesi.roger@epamail.epa.gov or Robert Menzer 202/564-6849, menzer.robert@epamail.epa.gov. The deadline for applications is September 10, 1998.

COSSA WELCOMES TWO NEWEST CONTRIBUTORS DH

COSSA is pleased to announce that George Mason University and Case Western Reserve University are our two newest contributors. We look forward to working with these two universities in the future on projects of mutual concern.

SOURCES OF RESEARCH SUPPORT KC

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.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
The Impact of Media on Adolescents' Sexual Behavior

The effects of media consumption on young people's attitudes and behavior regarding sex are of increasing interest to policy makers and program planners. A recent comprehensive review of the factors leading to early sexual activity and pregnancy concluded that surprisingly little empirical research had been conducted on the effects of growing up in an environment saturated by often problematic models of sexual behavior. One concern is the extent to which frequent consumption of media with high levels of sexual content and low levels of portrayal of responsible sexual conduct is a causal influence on young people's subsequent sexual behavior, including the responsible use of protection from pregnancy and disease. Basic research is called for to address the hypothesis that the content of various forms of media affects young people's attitudes and behavior with regard to sexual intercourse. This program announcement calls for research in three basic areas: (1) What sexual content do youth pay attention to, and how do they interpret what they see and hear?; (2) Does that media content affect their sexual beliefs and behavior?; (3) How could the mass media be used to promote responsible sexual behavior among youth?

For more information regarding this program announcement contact: Susan F. Newcomer, Ph.D., 301/496-1174 or email: Snewcomer@nih.gov.

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES**
Advanced Research Cooperation in Environmental Health

The mission of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) is to reduce the burden of human illness and dysfunction from environmental exposures. The NIEHS achieves its mission through multi-disciplinary biomedical research programs, prevention and intervention efforts, and communication strategies encompassing training, education, technology transfer, and community outreach. An important element of the NIEHS mission is to develop the research capacity of minority-serving institutions that have research scientists who are committed to understanding the impact of environmental exposures on human health. To address this need, the NIEHS has developed a pilot Program Project Grant that focuses on establishing research partnerships between investigators at Research Intensive Universities (RIUs) with significant environmental health sciences research and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). The purpose of this grant is to establish a research infrastructure and a hypothesis-driven research program at an HBCU.

Deadlines are as follows: Letter of Intent receipt date - July 17, 1998; Application receipt date - October 27, 1998. For more information regarding this Request for Application (RFA) contact: Michael Galvin, Ph.D., 919/541-7825 or email: Galvin@niehs.nih.gov.

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