

NEW SURPLUS ESTIMATES STIR SPENDING-TAX CUT BATTLE *ATS*

As Congress returns from the Independence Day recess, it faces the ever familiar budget battles that Congressional leaders vow to push forward to solve before the August recess, but that usually are not resolved until the new fiscal year looms in late September or even after it begins in early October. Once again, the legislative task may be eased by the latest estimates from the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office of a growing surplus. However, as election year politics have already begun, the Republicans have urged major tax cuts, while the administration has other ideas.

With estimates of the surplus hitting over a trillion dollars over the next ten years, the arguments over spending limitations that have bogged down this year's appropriations process seem silly. Yet some of the surplus forecasts are based on maintaining spending discipline in order to provide reduced interest payments in the future. The administration seems poised to accept some tax reductions, mostly targeted, but not without some solutions to the shortfalls in Social Security and Medicare. The administration would also like to see some targeted spending increases, particularly in education. The House Republicans, through Ways and Means Committee Chairman Representative Bill Archer (R-TX) are set to propose across-the-board tax rate reductions. Archer's counterpart in the Senate, Finance Committee Chairman William Roth (R-DE), appears to favor a more flexible approach to cutting taxes and Social Security and Medicare solutions. A compromise somewhere down-the-road appears in the offing, although there are some in Congress who might like a campaign instead of a solution.

Appropriations Committee To Move Bills

The GOP leadership has vowed to keep the appropriations process moving, even though some of the bills that emerge from the Committee deliberations will likely cause much consternation without some adjustments to provide increased funds for the panels to divide. So far, seven of the 13 bills have passed the Senate, but only three have received House approval.

The VA, HUD, Independent Agencies bill, which funds the National Science Foundation (NSF), is expected to be considered in both the House and Senate committees in the next two weeks. If the committees do not receive increases in their allocations, the numbers for NSF may not look very good. The House and Senate committees will also try to produce a Labor, Health and Human Services, Education appropriations bill to fund NIH, the other health related agencies, and the education programs. Again, severe problems with the allocation may make it difficult to repeat the 15 percent increase for NIH advocated by the health research community. If the large increase does occur, education programs may suffer severely.

The Senate has moved the Commerce, Justice, State bill through its committee (See *UPDATE*, June 14) without too much controversy on the Census. It has been the House that has always provided the more difficult path for this bill, which also funds the National Institute of Justice and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Mark up in the House should also occur in the next few weeks.

The Agriculture and Rural Development funding bill is one of the few that has passed the House (See *UPDATE*, June 14, 1999). The bill emerged from the Senate committee on June 17, but it has yet to reach the Senate floor. The Senate panel, like the House, rejected the administration's major increase for the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants program (NRI). The Senate committee provided \$119.3 million, the

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same as last year for the NRI, and \$13.9 more than the House. The Senate committee report also included language encouraging greater support for economics research in the NRI. For the Hatch Act Formula Grants, the Senate committee matched the House number of \$180.6 million, same as last year, and another rejection of the administration's attempt to reduce funding for this program. Special grants received \$54.3 million from the Senate panel, less than the \$62.9 million in the House. In the past the final appropriation for Special Grants has usually exceeded both the House and Senate figures.

The Economic Research Service (ERS) received \$65.4 million from the Senate committee. This includes \$12.2 million for food assistance studies and evaluations, of which \$2 million is transferred to the Food and Nutrition service. The House provided \$70.3 million. The National Agricultural Statistics Service was appropriated \$99.4 million, a decrease from the \$104 million allocated in FY 1999, and slightly less than the House level of \$100.6 million. From the FY 2000 recommendation, the Senate panel provided \$16.5 million for the Census of Agriculture.

All other appropriation bills are expected to move forward in the process before the August recess. However, some may remain mired down in disputes that do not necessarily have to do with funding levels. The Treasury, Postal Service, General Government bill has been held hostage in the House until some resolution occurs on gun control legislation. The full

appropriations panel will try to complete the markup on July 13. A vote is expected on the Walsh-Price amendment to delay implementation of the A-110 circular revisions regarding data release through the Freedom of Information Act.

DATA RELEASE: NEW OMB COMMENT PERIOD EXPECTED; HOUSE PANEL TO HOLD HEARING *HS*

In the meantime, the OMB is expected to issue another guideline within the next few weeks concerning data sharing and A-110. Another comment period of perhaps 30 days will be provided, before OMB issues its final rule. This second OMB iteration will attempt to provide answers to the questions raised by the 10,000 comments to its earlier proposal, including: What Are Data? and What Constitutes Publication?

Representative Stephen Horn (R-CA), Chairman of the House Government Information Subcommittee has decided to hold hearings on the data release issue on July 15. Witnesses from both sides of the dispute, including representatives of the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are expected to offer their views.

WHAT ARE THEY WORRIED ABOUT AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH? *AS*

According to National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Harold Varmus, while the perception is that NIH does not have a lot to worry about, they do worry. Varmus, speaking at a forum of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, noted that on the same day the NIH received its 15 percent increase for FY 1999, Senator Pete Domenici (R-NM), asked who's watching these guys? In his view the question was rhetorical. However, he noted, the members of the Budget Committee took the statement literally and invited Varmus to discuss how the NIH was planning to allocate the unprecedented \$2 billion increase in the NIH's budget with the committee. The NIH provided a literal breakdown of how it was going to spend the increase.

Four themes, said Varmus, reflect what is worrying NIH: 1) exploiting genomics — accelerating the human genome project; 2) reinvigorating clinical research;

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3) harnessing allied disciplines; and 4) reducing health disparities at home and abroad.

With regards to reducing health disparities, Varmus emphasized means defining the disparities, seeking explanations, testing interventions, training personnel, and building international research capacity. This may mean training more minorities, he stressed. In other parts of the world, it may mean establishing a more effective science base, he continued. He further indicated that the NIH is investigating the idea of a NIH Academy to provide intensive mentoring, in a university type setting, for those who aspire to conduct medical research.

A National Center for Research on Health Disparities?

Varmus also indicated that the NIH is worried about legislation, H.R. 2193, that would establish a National Center for Research on Domestic Health Disparities. The bill, introduced with seventy-one cosponsors, would convert the current NIH Office of Research on Minority Health (ORMH) into the National Center for Research on Health Disparities. A Center/Institute would give its director grant-making authority, an authority that the offices within the Office of the Director, including the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research do not have. Varmus stressed that the NIH has a vast set of initiatives addressed to health disparities and finds the creation of a Center/Institute "problematic." While he says he understands the motivation behind the legislation, he says the population would be poorly served by such a move. Such a Center/Institute, says Varmus, "cannot possibly have the kinds of expertise that is currently across all of NIH."

At a hearing in March of this year, examining an Institute of Medicine report "The Unequal Burden of Cancer," Louis Sullivan, former Secretary of Health and Human Services under the Bush Administration and current president of the Morehouse School of Medicine, noted that the culture, structure, and programs of the NIH "serve the white population well, but fall short in addressing the needs of ethnic minorities." Likewise, during FY 2000 appropriations hearings in the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Representative Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL), the chief sponsor of H.R. 2391, asked Varmus whether ethnic minorities would be better served with an elevation of the ORMH to a center.

H.R. 2391

H.R. 2391, as it is currently drafted, emphasizes that "[d]espite suffering disproportionate rates of illness, death, and disability, minorities have not been proportionately represented in many clinical research trials, except in studies of behavioral risk factors associated with negative stereotypes." The legislation specifically calls for "[c]ulturally sensitive approaches to research . . . to encourage minority participation in research studies." The bill also echoes the "national" need for minority scientists in biomedical, clinical, and health services research.

The proposed legislation directs the Director of the Center to:

- ◆ Identify projects of research on minority health "that should be conducted or supported by the Center and the other agencies of the National Institutes of Health," including the national research institutes;
- ◆ Identify multidisciplinary research relating to research on minority health that should be conducted or supported;
- ◆ Encourage the conduct of such research by entities receiving funds from the national research institutes;
- ◆ Recommend an agenda for conducting and supporting such research; and
- ◆ Promote the sufficient allocation of the resources of the Institutes for conducting and supporting such research.

The bill authorizes \$100 million in funding for such a Center in FY 2000 and "such sums as may be necessary for each of the fiscal years 2001 through 2004."

HOUSE PASSES JUVENILE CRIME BILL; CONFERENCE WITH SENATE IN PERIL DH

Following the Senate, the House passed juvenile crime legislation (H.R. 1501) on June 17. The Senate passed its juvenile crime bill (S 254) on May 20 (See *UPDATE*, June 14, 1999). The House and Senate must now hold a conference committee to reconcile the differences between the two bills. Despite the overwhelming public popularity of juvenile crime legislation in the wake of the Columbine, Colorado school shootings, the ultimate fate of passing legislation before Congress adjourns this Fall (October 29 adjournment date target) is in doubt.

Unlike the Senate's version, though, the House bill does not contain gun control provisions. While the Senate considered one bill with juvenile crime and gun control language, the House leadership decided to tackle gun control through separate legislation. However, attempts to pass a House version of the Senate gun control legislation (in the form of H.R. 2122) failed by a vote of 147-280 on June 18. The bill was defeated in large part because of Representative John Dingell's (D-MI), former board member of the National Rifle Association (NRA), success in watering down the gun control provisions of H.R. 2122 with an amendment supported by the NRA. The Dingell amendment, approved June 17 by a 211-208 vote, would have required only a 24-hour waiting period to purchase a gun at a gun show. Current law requires a 72-hour waiting period for gun purchases at a gun show.

Despite the differences in gun control, H.R. 1501, sponsored by House Crime Subcommittee Chairman Bill McCollum (R-FL), does contain some language similar to that contained in its companion Senate bill, S. 254. In particular, the House bill provides \$25 million over five years for the National Institutes of Health (NIH), acting through the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), to conduct a multi-year study on the causes and prevention strategies of youth violence. The House recommends research on the etiology of violence, the risk factors for youth violence, childhood precursors to anti-social behavior, the role of peer pressure in inciting youth violence, the processes by which children develop patterns of thought and behavior, science-based youth violence prevention strategies, and other subjects deemed appropriate by the Director of the OBSSR. Aside from its coordinating role, the bill would authorize the OBSSR to establish a clearinghouse for information about youth violence research conducted by governmental and nongovernmental institutions. OBSSR would also be required to periodically report to Congress on the state of youth violence research and make recommendations regarding research.

School Violence Study

The House bill calls on the Secretary of Education to enter into a contract with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to conduct a study regarding the antecedents of school violence in urban, rural, and suburban settings. The House recommends that the NAS study the most recent incidents of school violence, including the incidents in Pearl MI; Paducah, KY;

Jonesboro, AR; Springfield, OR; Edinboro, PA; Fayetteville, TN; Littleton, CO; and Conyers, GA.

The House bill would also require the U.S. Surgeon General, in cooperation with the NIH's National Institute of Mental Health, to conduct a comprehensive review of the impact of popular media violence (television, radio, audio recordings, video games, advertising, the Internet, and other outlets of mass culture) on the health and welfare of children and young adults. S 254 contains similar language.

A Possible Hurdle to Final Passage

The next step is to reconcile the differences of the two bills in a conference committee. It is not clear when either side will name their conferees. Senator Robert Smith (R-NH), who is running for president, has threatened to impede, if not kill, the final passage of the juvenile crime legislation. A vociferous opponent of gun control provisions, Smith claims that he will block the naming of Senate conferees because he believes the conference committee would adopt the Senate gun control provisions.

NRC PANEL HOLDS WORKSHOP ON RACIAL DISPARITIES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Panel on Juvenile Crime of the National Research Council (NRC) held a workshop June 28 to consider racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. The panel, part of NRC's Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (CBASSE), is in the process of drafting a report on the problems of juvenile crime and the best prevention methods. Workshop presenters provided the panel with written reports and summarized the reports at the workshop. All the conclusions and remarks are considered preliminary and will not be considered final until the panel releases its report.

The NRC juvenile crime panel was established to consider the full range of research studies and data sets dealing with juvenile crime, paying particular attention to research and data sets that can provide evidence of prevalence and seriousness; race, gender, and class bias; and impacts of deterrence, punishment, and prevention strategies. The panel will analyze the factors that contribute to delinquent behavior, assess the current practices of the juvenile justice system, explore the role

of community and institutional settings, and assess the quality of data sources of the clients of both public and private juvenile justice facilities.

At their latest workshop, panel co-chairs Joan McCord, Temple University, and Cathy Spatz Widom, University of Albany, State University of New York (SUNY-Albany), welcomed several social scientists, including: Steven Messner, SUNY-Albany; Ted Chiricos, Florida State University; Howard Pinderhughes, University of California at San Francisco; William Oliver, Indiana University; Philip Cook, Duke University; Delbert Elliot, University of Colorado, Boulder; George Bridges, University of Washington; and David Harris, University of Toledo, College of Law. The panel also heard from Laurie Schwede from the U.S. Census Bureau and Lawrence Greenfield from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

Some of the highlights of the workshop:

- Messner and Chiricos led a discussion of economic and social inequality and how certain socio-economic factors may contribute to a preponderance of African Americans, particularly African American male youth, in the nation's justice system.
- Pinderhughes, Oliver, and Cook focused their discussions on "values, beliefs, and situational determinants of offending." Pinderhughes stressed the importance of perceptions of violence and how children react to those perceptions. He said that many adolescents use violence as a protective mechanism. Cook spoke on the epidemic of youth violence and noted that youth violence is more a result of the environment than the character of the Nation's youth. He said the availability of guns and the rise of crack markets in the mid-1980s led to an increase in youth violence. The recent downturn in youth violence, he said, is largely the result of cumulative effect of policing efforts and a decline in the crack cocaine market.
- Schwede, from the U.S. Census Bureau, discussed factors affecting data quality in the juvenile justice system, particularly those that affect the quality of race and origin data in the children in custody census, including variations in methods used by institutions to obtain information, extent of the standardization of questions, and conceptual and operational definitions of Hispanic as race.

The Panel will hold its next meeting October 7-9, 1999 in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. The final report

is scheduled to be released in April 2000. For more information about CBASSE or the panel, contact <http://www.nas.edu>.

JUSTICE REAFFIRMS: CENSUS RESPONSES TO REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL *DH*

In what Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt described as a decision that "reaffirms the longstanding position of the Census Bureau to protect — without exception — the confidentiality of each person's answers to the census," the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) recently issued a memorandum which declared that a 1996 law does not require the Census Bureau to disclose information regarding citizenship or immigration status to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

In 1996, the Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRAIRA) which included a provision that prohibited government agencies from withholding from the INS any information on citizenship or immigration status. This provision could have affected the roughly one in six families that receives the census long-form questionnaire. That questionnaire asks whether the respondent is citizen of the United States.

Many advocacy organizations were concerned that the act would invalidate parts of the Census Act (Title 13, United States Code) which prohibits the disclosure of any individual census answers for any purpose. However, the OLC, in a written memorandum to officials of the Department of Commerce (the Census Bureau's parent agency), maintained that the Census Act does indeed ensure confidentiality.

In a letter to Commerce Secretary William Daley, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner noted that her agency "will not seek or accept any census information provided in violation of [the Census Act]. We at the INS understand that the assurance of confidentiality of census information has stood as a bedrock guarantee upon which all US citizens and residents can rely."

PREVENTION RESEARCH GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY AT CDC

At its July 9 meeting, the Advisory Committee to the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, following through on its efforts to increase the role and visibility of prevention research and its Prevention Research Initiative (PRI), created a Subcommittee on Prevention Research. The Subcommittee will be chaired by William L. Roper, M.D., M.P.H., Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Addressing the committee, Roper, a former CDC Director, emphasized that the issue of prevention research is nothing new at the CDC. What is new, he continued is the desire to "sell the world on prevention, just as it has been sold on biomedical research."

Recognizing the critical need to develop, expand and integrate peer-reviewed, extramural research in support of public health prevention programs, in FY 1999, the CDC received \$15 million in funding from the administration's 21st Century Research Fund initiative to strengthen its prevention research activities, including its extramural research programs and its funding of research of immediate relevancy to public health problems. The resources are being used to support programmatic areas requiring new or special emphasis and CDC's Research Centers of Excellence. These categories were designed to increase the agency's capacity to "take research to the point of practice in communities and to inform public health policy." The CDC, in articulating its prevention research priorities for FY 1999, noted that as the agency "embarks on setting research agenda across all of its program areas, increased opportunities for external input in setting priorities will be available."

The CDC characterizes its prevention research program as "problem-solving, population-based research which focuses on preventable risk factors using multidisciplinary, community-based approaches." This type of public health research, notes the agency, engages teams of scientists (e.g., behavioral scientists epidemiologists, economists) working in cooperation with members of the affected community to apply scientific methods to develop and evaluate public health strategies and interventions. According to Ruth Berkelman, the Senior Adviser to the Director and the Director of the agency's Office of Prevention Research, the CDC is increasingly working with extramural researchers as a part of the team to address the

complexity of many public health problems and is seeking to expand those collaborations.

Subcommittee Goals

According to Roper, four potential goals have been identified for the Subcommittee including:

1) Providing a Framework for Prevention

Research: A "key issue to consider in developing a research framework for the CDC's prevention research activities concerns how to foster the use of multidisciplinary perspectives and methods that embrace but go beyond the traditional biomedical and epidemiologic approaches that CDC has mastered in other research domains," stressed Roper. "Other valuable theoretical and methodological knowledge-bases, including psychology, sociology, economics, political science, biostatistics, organizational sociology and demography, to name a few, he noted.

2) Recommending Research Priorities:

Roper suggested that in developing research priorities and resources for the CDC's prevention research initiative, the Subcommittee should consider several issues:

- a) Priorities should be developed in tandem with the issues and information needs of practitioners, and health care and public health organizations, and communities.
- b) Effective intervention and dissemination research will require strong partnerships with the practice community.
- c) Expanded prevention research opportunities and resources can be realized through expanded collaboration with other federal health agencies: Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, Health Care Financing Administration, Health Resources and Services Administration, and the National Institutes of Health.

3) Strengthening the Infrastructure for Extramural

Research: Roper stressed that an array of strategies should be considered for building strong, more effective relationships with academia and the private research industry.

4) Recommending Directions for Prevention

Research Initiative: To achieve the Subcommittee's goal of advising the Director on the overall direction of PRI, the Subcommittee should, said Roper, 1) Assist in examining research activities in relation to research priorities and overall objectives; 2) Recommend strategies for promoting the accomplishments of PRI

and enhancing visibility; and 3) Provide feedback on the utility of PRI activities for practitioners, researchers and communities.

Core and Expansion Areas of Research

Elaborating, Roper said that three core areas of research are proposed for the CDC's prevention research framework:

- ◆ Etiologic Research — focusing on disease mechanism, intervention points, and risk factors.
- ◆ Intervention Research — focused on efficacy, effectiveness, and acceptability of alternative preventive interventions; and
- ◆ Dissemination Research —concentrating on strategies for encouraging adoption and use of effective preventive interventions by health professionals, health plans, employers, consumers, and other relevant stakeholders.

He also suggested "several expansion areas for research," which would draw from the field of health services research and offer "insight concerning how preventive interventions can be best organized, delivered, and financed in clinical and community settings." These include, said Roper, economic evaluation studies, quality-of-care research; practice variation studies, access studies, workforce studies; and organizational and market studies.

CDC SEEKS INVESTIGATOR-INITIATED PROPOSALS

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In FY 1999 the CDC is seeking investigator-initiated research proposals to inform public health policy in the following areas:

Genetics: The CDC's National Center for Environmental Health is looking to fund research that "targets epidemiologic research in well-defined populations that assesses the interaction of modifiable risk factors (e.g., diet, chemical exposures, infections, lifestyles) with known genetic disease risk factors."

Prevention of Viral Sexually Transmitted Diseases: The National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention is seeking research proposals that address the unanswered questions associated with genital Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) infection, including research that develops, implements, and evaluates methods to determine the psychosocial and economic burdens associated with a diagnosis of genital HSV.

Effective Health Communication Strategies: The Office of Communications within the Office of the Director is looking to further CDC's understanding of, and ability to apply, effective health communication strategies outlined in the CDC health communication research agenda.

Managed Care: The Office of Health Care Partnerships/EPO is searching for research proposals that address practical approaches to increasing the utilization of preventive services in the United States, including immunization services for children; vision screening for three and 4- year olds; and chlamydia screening of women ages 15 - 24.

NORA Intervention Effectiveness: The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) has 21 priority areas to advance research in occupational safety and health research and training. Research proposals that examine the systematic evaluation of workplace prevention and intervention efforts at various stages of development, levels of complexity, and targeted in range from regulatory or voluntary occupational safety or health standards to the change of a single, specific work process, control technology, training program, or informational campaign. Special consideration will be given to proposals evaluating interventions in agriculture, construction services (especially health care), and mining.

Applied Research on Surveillance of Vaccine Preventable Diseases in Managed Care Settings and Introduction of New Vaccines: The National Immunization Program (NIP) is seeking research proposals examining ways to better define the magnitude of the disease burden posed by vaccine preventable diseases, particularly for disease for which current surveillance is inadequate. NIP is also seeking research projects to address clinical epidemiologic or health services delivery questions about new vaccines.

For more information see the CDC Web Page:
<http://www.cdc.gov>.

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