



# COSSA Washington Update

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Science Associations

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## SPENDING BILLS ON FAST TRACK, FOR NOW

While there is still doubt that any of the FY 2005 appropriations bills, with the exception of Defense and Homeland Security, will see enactment before the election, the House has moved swiftly to try and complete its action on the 13 spending bills. The Senate has begun the process as well. The Defense bill has passed both chambers and is on its way to a conference committee. With the \$25 billion in Iraq war spending the Administration requested, this has become priority legislation. The “war on terror” also necessitates the speedy passage of the Department of Homeland Security funding bill. It too has passed the House and has made it through the Senate full appropriations committee, with floor action expected soon.

On the domestic side, the House has passed the Interior bill with funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities at \$141.8 million, a \$6.5 million boost from the FY 2004 level. An amendment on the House floor increased the funding by \$3 million for the “We the People” initiative pushed by the Administration. The House has also moved the Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, and State, Energy and Water, and Legislative Branch bills through the full Appropriations committee, and the Foreign Operations bill through the Subcommittee. The two major bills of interest for social and behavioral science research funding, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies, which includes the National Science Foundation, will wait until after the July 4 recess.

House Appropriations Committee chairman Rep. C.W. Bill Young wants all 13 bills

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## RESTRUCTURING OF NIH; HOUSE HOLDS HEARING ON NIH PRIORITY SETTING

On June 2, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health continued its series of hearings designed to highlight the research activities at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Director Elias Zerhouni, accompanied by directors from three of the NIH institutes: Andrew von Eschenbach (Cancer), Anthony Fauci (Allergy and Infectious Diseases) and Nora Volkow (Drug Abuse), appeared before the Subcommittee.

New Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Joe Barton (R-TX), emphasized that the goal of the subcommittee hearing was to “look at the mission statement of how NIH sets its priorities.” Barton explained that while the full committee’s Oversight Subcommittee is

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through the House before the summer recess that begins on July 23. He has also floated a trial balloon of an omnibus bill that would wrap up the whole appropriations process by the end of September. It appears the Senate, which is less easy to control than the House, will complicate Young's plans.

Below are the FY 2005 numbers for programs related to social and behavioral science in the Agriculture, and Commerce, State, and Justice appropriations bills as reported out of the full House Appropriations Committee. The directed language comes from the Committee's draft reports that accompany the legislation.

### **Agriculture**

The Agricultural, Rural Development, FDA Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-TX), did its best within the limited spending available. The **Economic Research Service** received \$76.6 million, close to \$6 million above its FY 2004 appropriation, but about \$3.5 million below the Administration's request. The Subcommittee also provided almost \$3 million for a Consumer Data and Information System "to develop an integrated and comprehensive data analysis framework... to provide a basis for understanding, monitoring, tracking, and identifying changes in food supply and consumption patterns."

The House panel provided the **National Agricultural Statistical Service** \$128.7 million, an increase of \$500,000 over the current year's appropriation, and about \$9 million below the request. The Census of Agriculture was funded at the requested level of \$22.5 million. The Subcommittee is encouraging the agency to "develop an organic data survey process based on its 2003 Census of Agriculture."

The **National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program** got a boost of \$17 million above the FY 2004 level to \$181 million, which is \$1 million above the request. The **Hatch Act** programs would receive \$180.6 million, a \$1.5 million raise from the current year, restoring some of the funding lost in recent years from across-the-board reductions. Once again ignoring the Administration's pleas to reduce **Special Research Grants** deemed worthy by Congress, the Subcommittee funded these projects at \$100.5 million, including almost \$1.3 million for the Rural Policy Institute. This is less than the current year's \$124.2 million, but the Senate usually adds its own favorite projects to boost the final number.

The House Commerce, Justice, State Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), recommended a total operating level of \$773.9 million for the **Bureau of the Census**. Of that total, \$571.1 million is for periodic censuses and related programs, \$37 million below the Administration's request. From that figure, \$173.8 million will go toward planning and designing a short-form only 2010 Census, and \$80.2 million will go to enhance the Master Address and TIGER (Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing) files. The Committee also recommended \$146 million for the American Community Survey. This is the full request with the exception of funding for group quarters testing, which the Committee believes can be postponed for a year. The Committee "strongly supports the Administration's efforts to collect long-form data on an on-going basis rather than waiting for once-a-decade decennial long-form data." For the Salaries and Expenses account, which includes non-decennial programs such as economic censuses and the demographic statistics programs, the panel provided \$202.8 million.

The **Economic and Statistics Administration**, whose account includes the **Bureau of Economic Analysis**, received \$78.2 million, \$4 million above the current year, and \$10.2 million below the request.

The Subcommittee rejected the Administration's attempt to severely cut funding for State and local law enforcement assistance, calling it "ill-conceived." It also refused to go along with the budget request proposal to merge all **Office of Justice Programs** into one Justice Assistance account. The committee gave the **National Institute of Justice** (NIJ) a base budget of \$55 million, \$7.5 million above FY 2004. NIJ will receive additional funding under the two assistance programs named for Edward Byrne, the Violence Against Women program, and the DNA initiative. The latter received the requested \$175.8 million, which included funding for research, development, demonstration, and evaluation.

The **Bureau of Justice Statistics** (BJS) received \$34 million, \$2.2 million above current year funding, but \$4.7 million below the request. The Byrne Grants program, the Violence Against Women program, and the Prison Rape Prevention program also provide funds for BJS activities. The Prison Rape program allocates \$15 million for the collection of statistics, data, and research regarding sexual assaults in prisons.

Additionally, the bill includes \$345.3 million for

**the State Department's Educational and Cultural Exchange programs.** This is \$28.7 million above the current year, and the same as the budget request. This funding supports a myriad of exchanges including the Fulbright student and scholar and International Visitor programs. The Committee made clear that it wants the State Department to enhance its support to engage Arab and Muslim audiences through educational and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, it asks the Department to support foreign visitors and students exchange programs on religious freedom, the relationship between religion and the state, and the role of religion in civil society.

#### **NIH PRIORITY SETTING, (Continued from Page 1)**

also holding hearings on NIH, "this subcommittee is looking at the general structure of NIH and how we can maybe reorganize, reprioritize, reform to make it better." We are not concerned about your peer review process," Barton related, but we are concerned that the NIH has evolved into 27 institutes and centers, and that "they have grown up serendipitously."

Recognizing the lack of control the NIH Director has in running the agency (the subject of a congressionally-mandated study by the National Academies); Barton stressed his desire to, "on a bipartisan basis through these hearings, to come up with a legislative package to reauthorize NIH." Most of the programs at NIH have not been reauthorized in a number of years; he noted, and he indicated his desire to come up with "some legislative reforms that make it easier for NIH to do its function." (See *Update*, August 11, 2003). Refuting recent press accounts that "Congress is out to get NIH," Barton stressed that "nothing could be further from the truth. . . Our goal is to have an NIH reauthorization package ready to move through this committee in this Congress."

Noting that "the priority setting process at NIH and within individual institutes has drawn questions . . . from members of Congress, as well as patient advocacy groups and others, Health Subcommittee Chairman Michael Bilirakis (R-FL) expressed his belief that "much of the criticism has arisen because [the NIH's] priority setting process is extremely complicated, especially the grant approval process." In addition, he noted, "NIH lacks transparency in many of their decision-making procedures." He further expressed his hope that the hearing would "give members an opportunity to really understand what criteria is used to determine which grants are funded and why."

Expressing his appreciation to the NIH contingent,

Ranking Member Sherrod Brown (D-OH) emphasized that it was "incumbent upon the Congress to ensure that NIH resources are allocated in a manner that is reasoned, efficient, and fair." The Congress also has a "requisite obligation to ensure ample funding overall for NIH," he noted, referencing a memo recently leaked to the press that indicates that the president plans to cut 600 million from NIH in 2006. "We need to be aware that NIH cannot evolve without the resources to do so. Prioritizing research doesn't mean anything if [NIH] can't fund it," he asserted

#### **Congressional Self Restraint Urged**

In his opening statement, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) stressed that Congress, with NIH's guidance, must decide how much to appropriate to the general research areas covered by each of the institutes and centers. He emphasized the need for Congress, "after it has exercised its oversight responsibilities, to step back and allow NIH scientists to decide what specific research projects will produce the greatest gains for our humanity."

Waxman expressed his increasing concerns regarding "congressional interference in NIH decisions to fund specific research grants . . . As the members of this subcommittee look into NIH's work, I hope we will all exercise self-restraint." He noted that in the past, "some members of Congress have given in to a temptation to substitute their scientific judgment for that of the peer review process," a "very perilous activity." Alluding to the attempt in July 2003 during consideration of the House Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill to rescind the funding for five previously peer-reviewed approved grants pertaining to sexual behavior and function funded by NIH and the continuing inquiries from members of Congress about these grants, Waxman underscored the "need for funding decisions to be based on whether such research will or will not help us learn how to stop

the spread of serious diseases and reduce human suffering."

Waxman declared that he is "pleased" that Dr. Zerhouni has affirmed both the scientific importance of research on sexual behavior and his continuing support for the peer review process at NIH (See *Update*, February 9, 2004). "And I hope that from this subcommittee that we will have continuation of the policy to support a process whereby our best scientists pursue the research that they have determined the best chance to save many lives," he concluded.

#### **Scientific 'Witch Hunts' Discouraged**

Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA) reiterated her support for NIH's support of research pertaining to sexual behavior and function. "Some of our colleagues ... have raised questions about NIH grants on human sexuality. Congressional oversight is important, but it is critical, I believe, that we be very serious about keeping politics from interfering with science," stated Capps. "We here should not try to micromanage scientists about how to conduct their research, and we should not engage in witch hunts to discourage research in particular areas." (See *Update*, April 19, 2004)

Suggesting that he was speaking "from a very conservative area of the country," Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL) explained that "we talked about this at the last bicameral hearing we had on the Senate side last year that it helps us in rural America if the grants that issued passed the common sense test" (See *Update*, October 6, 2004). Shimkus asked Zerhouni if there "is a way that [NIH] can, through this evaluation process, bring some sense or explanation on those that don't."

Responding, Zerhouni noted that it was "a very important question" and that the NIH "found after [its] review that we could do a lot better in making sure we communicate transparently and also fully about the importance or lack thereof of particular research." He explained that since the review he has, in conjunction with all of the directors in NIH's extramural offices, issued new requirements for elucidating in plain language both the public relevance as well as the importance of the research scientifically so that that is available in clearly understandable language, both to the public and to the multiple review levels in place.

"The common sense test that you rightly bring up is something that we're quite concerned about, because we depend on the support of all taxpayers," Zerhouni acknowledged. "We need to make sure that whatever we do makes scientific sense and public health sense." Applauding the effort, Shimkus cautioned that as the NIH moves to more transparency, he hoped "that it helps and doesn't hinder, because, again, many of us would question the common sense application of some of these grants. More transparency may make it more difficult to defend the NIH," he acknowledged.

"Obviously, in areas such as HIV/AIDS, it's a sexually-transmitted disease, it's a disease that is transmitted by injection drug use, by a variety of other mechanisms," Fauci added. "So we cannot avoid addressing the issues that are at the very foundation of why millions and millions of people are getting

infected. That is the reason why we are sensitive to the issues you bring up, really quite sensitive, but we need to let the science drive the question if we are going to be able to get a handle on this very devastating sexually-transmitted disease," he concluded.

Responding to the comments made by Shimkus, Rep. Ted Strickland (D-OH), a minister, college professor, and one of four psychologists in the Congress, noted that "the common sense test is not relevant because it's common, and that which is easily or readily understood or appreciated is not, it seems to me, the major domain of the scientific inquiry. You want to look at that which is not common or easily or readily appreciated or understood. It seems to me that is what the scientific inquiry is all about," Strickland explained.

Requesting an explanation of the peer review process and why it is considered the gold standard worldwide for determining the scientific quality for members of the Subcommittee, Capps, a nurse, noted that grant applications may sound inappropriate when summarized in one paragraph. "Some of this supports science around esoteric projects, but underlying it is the need to understand the millions of Americans who have suffered from HIV/AIDS, sexually-transmitted diseases, sexual dysfunction, mental health consequences of abuse and various hard topics to get a hold of," she explained

Explaining the peer review process and how it works, Zerhouni noted that this is one of the most common questions he gets as he travels around the world — How is the NIH's peer review process so effective in identifying areas of science? He added that over 105 Nobel prizes have come through the agency's peer review process.

Indicating the level of congressional scrutiny applied to NIH's research portfolio, Rep. Joseph Pitts (R-PA) "could not resist" mentioning the abstract of a research proposal on dorm room wall decorations of college students. "When a multiyear grant is awarded by an institute, what, if any, authority do you have as NIH director to make a change if it is determined at a later date that this project is of less significance given current public health needs," he asked the director.

The dorm room decorating study was a small grant funded over three years ago. It is no longer active, Zerhouni stated. The research was thought useful at the time by the review committee because they believed it could provide a diagnostic test of college students who may be developing or experiencing mental health

or personality disorder problems.

Zerhouni added that he would like to have processes in place that will give Members of Congress assurances that the research has been reviewed, its scientific merit established, and it is clearly explained. He pointed out that if one only reads the title of this particular grant, it would obviously make no sense. But if you look at the justification for the research proposal, you realize that psychological tests that look at drawings, for example, that children use on their walls tell us something about the mental state of an individual.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATION FOCUS OF COSSA BRIEFING

On June 7, just days after the death of the “great communicator,” former President Ronald Reagan, COSSA held its second congressional briefing, *Risk and Crisis Communication: Building Trust and Explaining Complexities When Emergencies Arise*, before a standing room only crowd on Capitol Hill. The briefing was cosponsored by the National Communication Association and the American Sociological Association.

Welcoming the audience, COSSA Executive Director and moderator of the event Howard Silver, noted the passing of President Reagan and pointed out that the former president was responsible for the existence of the Consortium. The social science associations decided to respond to his administration’s initial budget proposals to severely reduce spending for social and behavioral science research. That response resulted in the formation of COSSA as an advocacy group.

Twenty-three years later, Silver suggested, the Bush Administration’s science adviser, John Marburger, and many others have repeatedly highlighted the importance of the social, behavioral, and economic sciences to America’s economic and homeland security. In addition, Marburger and the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies have emphasized the importance of communicating warnings about attacks. The NRC report *Making the Nation Safer* has declared that “warning systems should be carefully designed with respect to who issue the warning, optimal lead time of warning, unambiguous language and moderated emotional tone.” The report also discussed the role of the media in defining the nature, scope, and level of threat in critical situations, in disseminating both reliable and unreliable information, and in calming

the population. Further, the recent hearings in New York City conducted by the 9/11 Commission underscored the need to be able to communicate well in a crisis. For these reasons, COSSA invited three distinguished social scientists to discuss their research results relating to these issues.

### Measuring Risk/Crisis Communication

H. Dan O’Hair, professor of communication at the University of Oklahoma, began by explaining to the audience that “academically speaking, risk communication is the exchange of information among interested parties about the nature, magnitude, significance or control of a risk.” The public, O’Hair noted, generally think of risk as something we can manage. “We manage and hedge against risk in our personal lives,” he explained. For the academic and the practitioner communities, “crisis communication (also known as emergency communication) is organized, analysis, planning, decision-making, and assignment of available resources to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and protect property and the environment when an emergency or disaster occurs.” Distinguishing crisis communication from risk communication, O’Hair explained that the former is about an event that has occurred, whereas the latter is a projection of what might occur.

O’Hair discussed research that demonstrated that the public does not just hear a message and then goes and does exactly what the message asks. They think about it and they analyze it and maybe they will respond to it. O’Hair also talked about two challenges that face risk and crisis communication practitioners and researchers: 1) varying expectations of the public and 2) advances in communication science.

The public, O’Hair explained, has expectations that public officials will communicate with them about risks and about crisis. But, what is it about a selective public that risk and crisis communicators need to know about, he submitted. First, source credibility – Do they trust the individual that is communicating the message? Second, risk crisis source match – Do we have the right person for the right crisis and the right risk? And third, media preferences -- Research since 9/11, he related, has found that the preponderance of people in the public prefer TV news and cable during a crisis event. After the outrage has subsided, however, they turn to other media sources (Internet, newspapers, and interpersonal communication) to seek information and verify their perceptions and emotions felt initially. What is needed, O’Hair explained, is the development of advanced models for understanding how the public comes to trust risk and crisis sources and

how they use risk and crisis information.

Regarding advances in communication science, the second challenge, O’Hair related that over the past 10 – 15 years there has been an explosion of communication science research that is specific to how public officials communicate to the public, hoping to evoke some kind of response. He also discussed five theories associated with taking evaluation and assessment to the next level to advance communication science. Given that there is an “embarrassment of riches” in the accumulation of communication science over the last 10 – 15 years, he emphasized that: “We need to take advantage of it and build stronger models . . . We’ve got to start triangulating our research. That is the people in sociology, anthropology, public policy, political science and communication all need to start together and cross-referencing each other’s work.” Finally, he concluded, “we need to cultivate partnerships,” with public policy makers, researchers and practitioners.”

### **Role of Science, Technology, and Media**

Havidan Rodriguez, the director of the Disaster Research Center and professor in the department of sociology and criminal justice at the University of Delaware, discussed the role of science, technology, and the media in communicating risk and warnings. The Center was the first social science center devoted to the study of hazards and disasters in the world and just celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Rodriguez explored what needs to be done and how we engage and respond to our communities. Echoing O’Hair in calling for a multidisciplinary approach, he noted the “need to develop a holistic model to communicate risk and warnings which takes into account the contributions of different disciplines.”

He also identified the need to not only consider the role of new and emerging technology and how that enhances communication, but how it also creates problems in communicating warnings and crisis information to the general public. In order to communicate with our communities, he related, we must know who these communities are, citing the changing socio-economic and demographic changes that are occurring in the U.S. In many of these communities the primary language is not English, their ideas, values and cultures are not the traditions in the society at-large.

Social scientists, said Rodriguez, are needed to better understand and expand our knowledge regarding how individuals and how organizations perceive and respond to, for instance, forecasts, warnings, and risk

information. We know, he explained that “disaster behavior and perception of risk, varies according to income, to education, to race, to ethnicity, and to the location of the residents or individuals.” These are important variables that we need to take into consideration, he emphasized.

To do this, we must provide information to the community in a form that is comprehensible and useful. It must be perceived as relevant to them, he stressed. “This information must make me aware of my risk; I [must] recognize my risk, and the potential outcomes,” Rodriguez explained.

He noted that technological innovations -- earth observational systems, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), remote sensing, and cellular phones -- have dramatically altered and transformed the way we communicate. While this may seem to be a good thing, he noted that “access to multiple sources of information can create confusion and uncertainty, particularly if it is inconsistent, contradictory and inaccurate.”

Rodriguez concluded by noting that “risk and disasters are socially-constructed phenomena influenced by our cultural norms, our prejudices, our values, and therefore it is important to take the social sciences into consideration. . .If we continue to focus on the development of technology while ignoring societal impacts and the social factors that influence disaster behavior and response in the communication processes, we are going to go in the wrong direction.”

### **Earning Trust and Productive Partnering with the Media and Public**

Katherine Rowan, professor of communication at George Mason University, examined the research on effective risk, crisis, and emergency communication and how it can be translated into strategies and steps for communicating effectively with the public.

According Rowan, some of the emergency communication challenges practitioners confront include alerting people without panicking them, fostering emotional resilience when a disaster strikes, communicating preparedness for terrorist attacks, chemical, and biological and nuclear, and reducing media sensationalism.

In social science parlance, noted Rowan, this is “trying to take people’s feelings and perspectives and change lay theories about how we communicate in mass approaches that will be more likely to result in safe

behavior.”

One important function that the briefing can serve, Rowan emphasized, is to connect the attendees to each other. She explained how a memory aid or mnemonic could help the attendees to put the information from the briefing together to use if you happen to be an emergency spokesperson. One such approach she noted is something called the CAUSE model. It is a memory aid to think about classic tensions or obstacles in risk and crisis situations. CAUSE stands for: **C**onfidence (in communication), **A**wareness (of danger), **U**nderstanding (of danger), **S**atisfaction (with solution), and **E**nactment (of safety steps).

Rowan noted that “frequently the most important problem when we are talking about some sort of physical danger is the fact that [the public] is more afraid of the officials.” Thus, a difficult challenge for officials is to “earn the trust of those who are afraid of physical danger, but, frankly, unfortunately, of [officials] as well.”

A second important challenge, said Rowan, is how do you create awareness of the danger? An individual trusts the communicators, but sometimes do not literally hear the warning signal. A third challenge is that the person understands the message. This relates to Rodriguez’s concern with the diversity of the American population.

The fourth challenge is satisfaction with solutions. “We all know about the dangers of terrorism, but we clearly disagree about how best to manage them.” So we need to find agreement on how to manage dangers. “Last, and not at all least, sometimes we need to move from agreeing that something is a good idea to actually doing it.” Rowan explained.

For example, she explained how risk and crisis communicators tell us that everybody should have a survival kit with them in their home, their office, and their car. That is, we should have three days work of water, three days worth of food. We should have a radio that runs on batteries. If we had those survival kits, we would be less likely to tax emergency systems, she asserted. But, it was clear from the audience that most people have not complied with this warning.

### Recommendations

1. Develop and maintain a database on behavioral and social science curricular content, teaching techniques, and assessment of methodologies in U.S. medical schools.
2. Provide an integrated, 4-year curriculum in the behavioral and social sciences that at a minimum include the six high-priority domains identified by the Committee.
3. Establish a career development award strategy to produce leaders in the behavioral and social sciences in the medical schools.
4. Establish curriculum development demonstration project awards at U.S. medical schools.
5. Increase behavioral and social science content on the U.S. Medical Licensing Examination to ensure that it adequately reflects the topics in the behavioral and social sciences recommended in the report.

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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.

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