



COSSA

Washington Update

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WASHINGTON WAITS

At his victory rally the morning after the 1960 election, President-Elect John F. Kennedy announced it was time to “prepare for a new Administration and a new baby.” For the past month, political Washington, as contrasted with non-political Washington featured in Edward P. Jones’ short stories or George Pelecanos’ crime novels, has been preparing for a possibly transformative election and a lame-duck congressional session.

For political junkies the about-to-be-upon-us election has provided a plethora of opportunities for crystal-ball gazing, punditry, and a 24/7 pursuit of information on the myriad of contests taking place across America. Examples abound: the Internet, with its blogs reverberating every candidate gaffe and web pages devoted to daily polling updates in key contests; Cable TV with 24 hour news channels filling the air with “all politics, all the time,” and even the mainstream media such as the [Washington Post](#) trying to capture the frenzy of NCAA Basketball’s “March Madness” with a contest they have called “Midterm Madness,” asking people to predict all 435 House and the 35 Senate races; and political scientists and economists unveiling and tweaking prediction models and election “markets.”

This will all be over very soon, assuming we know the results promptly and without too many mishaps (for some a mighty big assumption). With that, attention will turn to the old Congress’ last gasp in a lame-duck session scheduled for the week of November 13. In the midst of that session, the Democrats and Republicans expect to pick their leaders for the new Congress. What those contests are and who the candidates are will depend on the results of November 7.

The other business for the lame-duck is finishing the FY 2007 appropriations process. Congress completed only two of the eleven spending bills - Defense and Homeland Security - before the

onset of the new fiscal year on October 1, 2006. Domestic programs, including the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health, are operating until November 17 under a Continuing Resolution. Two scenarios are emerging for funding after that date: an omnibus bill that wraps up all outstanding appropriations accounts into one large bill or a new Continuing Resolution that runs into calendar year 2007, giving the new Congress a chance to rework some of the spending decisions made by the old Congress.

While this is taking place, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is reviewing the agency submissions for the FY 2008 budget, which President Bush will reveal in early February 2007. The agencies await their Thanksgiving "present" when the passback process, OMB informing them what their preliminary numbers will be, occurs. The agencies are then allowed to appeal to the White House and in certain circumstances the White House may include last-minute funding priorities.

In addition, the waiting period also produced the usual number of reports from the government and various organizations. The National Academy of Sciences, as mandated by law, issued a triennial evaluation of the National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI). In evaluating the societal dimension program component of the NNI, it ignored the subtopic of "research directed at identifying and quantifying the broad implications of nanotechnology for society, including social, economic, workforce, educational, ethical and legal implications," and focused most of its comments on the environmental, health and safety aspects.
(Go to: <http://newton.nap.edu/catalog/11752.html>.)

The American Association of University Professors remained concerned about the human subjects' protection system and the burdens Institutional Review Boards are placing on researchers conducting studies that do not appear to place people in harms way. (See: <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/About/committees/committee+repts/CommA/ResearchonHumanSubjects.htm?PF=1>.)

FROM THE DESK OF THE NIH DEPUTY DIRECTOR: REQUEST FOR PUBLIC INPUT

I am inviting you to participate in a process designed to increase synergy across all of the Institutes and Centers (ICs) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH Roadmap for Medical Research is intended to be an "incubator space" for programs that, due to their cross-cutting relevance and/or complexity, warrant concerted attention from NIH as a whole. Consistent with its incubator function, the Roadmap stimulates research or the development of research resources with the expectation that the programs will either be completed within a 5-10 year timeframe or will transition out of the incubator space in this same time frame as they become integral to IC activities. In preparation for the transition of the first cohort of Roadmap initiatives out of the incubator space, we are soliciting ideas for the next set of Roadmap trans-NIH strategic initiatives for funding consideration in fiscal year 2008.

On October 20, NIH released a Request for Information (RFI) (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-07-011.html>) inviting input and ideas from our broad stakeholder communities on ways to address specific barriers to basic, translational, or clinical research or to fill knowledge gaps that impede research across a broad spectrum of health science. This request follows a recently concluded solicitation for new ideas from the internal NIH community and five meetings with scientists from around the nation representing various disciplines and areas of investigation. The idea nominations collected to date are posted on the RFI Web site located at <http://www.reffectcomments.org/roadmap/>. I hope that you will take the time to visit the Web site to contribute your ideas and view the ideas previously nominated. Please bring the RFI to the attention of your colleagues and any other interested parties.

I appreciate your time and look forward to your participation in this process.

Sincerely,

Raynard S. Kington, M.D., Ph.D.
Deputy Director,
Acting Director,
Office of Portfolio Analysis and
Strategic Initiatives
National Institutes of Health

CENSUS BUREAU DEDICATES NEW HEADQUARTERS

On October 26, the U.S. Census Bureau held a ceremony to dedicate its new state-of-the-art headquarters. Located in Suitland, Maryland just outside Washington, D.C. the building's spacious atrium was filled with census employees, community leaders, and advocates on hand to help celebrate the replacement of the previous 64 year-old building with its many problems. Funding the much needed up to date facility was an uphill battle, but it all deemed worthy in the end.

Census Director Louis Kincannon, Senators Paul Sarbanes (D-MD) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Representative Albert Wynn (D-MD), and other dignitaries spoke about the long and difficult road to achieving this major milestone in the Census Bureau's plan to modernize and consolidate its operations.

After Sarbanes recited a litany of the difficulties Bureau employees faced with the old building, Mikulski gave a boisterous address describing her role in pushing for funding of the new facility from her seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee. She was helped by Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD) from his seat on the House Appropriations panel. Mikulski also noted how she insured that the Suitland community was brought into the planning of the new building, which joins the Office of Naval Intelligence and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in a federal complex that officials hope will help revitalize the Suitland area. Mikulski also noted that she fought hard against plans to put a barbed wire fence around the complex that would have cut it off from the surrounding community.

Lurita A. Doan, Administrator of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), remarked that it is important that federal employees have an appropriate workplace. "This award-winning facility, located six miles from the capitol, provides the space and tools that the bureau needs to complete its upcoming mission," she said. "GSA's mission is to help other agencies better serve the public by providing goods, services and workspace at best value. The Census Bureau is among our most valued agency clients, and a terrific tenant to boot."

Six thousand Census employees will occupy the 1.5 million square feet spread across eight floors, which will include offices, meeting areas, a cafeteria, credit union, fitness center, library, and support space, as well as 3,098 parking spaces in two garages. The new headquarters is more than an upgrade from the bureau's previous home, which was an aged building full of asbestos, lead and leaking roofs that had long been too small for the agency.

Sarbanes summed it up best when he referenced Winston Churchill to define this event. "We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us," he said. Hopefully, the new environment will help produce a successful 2010 decennial census.

THIRD ANNUAL BROWN LECTURE

On Thursday 26, Linda Darling-Hammond, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at Stanford University, delivered the third annual Brown Lecture in Education Research presented by American Educational Research Association (AERA). Hammond's lecture entitled "The Flat Earth and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future," focused on how our education system needs to recommit to the ideals of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision requiring equal education for all children.

Hammond asserted that while our country's workplace and educational needs have changed during the last century our educational system has not. In 1900 only 5 percent of the work force consisted of knowledge-based jobs. Today that number is 70 percent. Our schools, she argued, were designed at a time when the workplace was vastly different and most students were destined for blue-collar jobs or the home.

Like many in the education research field, Hammond believes our schools are doing a poor job of preparing students for higher education. Only two out of three students receive a high school diploma, and of those students only 65 percent go on to attend college, with only 40 percent of those students graduating. Contrast this with the fact that 70 percent of today's jobs require a college degree. Hammond describes this current state of education as either "an opportunity for significant change or the beginning of the fall of Rome."

Hammond pronounced her belief that one of the major problems with our education system is the systemic inequality. Not just inequality in terms of financial resources and materials, but also inequality in the level of teacher quality. The academic achievement gap between whites and minorities continues to grow. Hammond explains that this inequality results from many factors including: lower funding levels, larger class sizes, less well qualified teachers, fewer Advanced Placement (AP) and college prep courses, larger school sizes, and fewer basic resources such as computers and books.

She pointed out that two-thirds of Black and Latino students attend predominately minority schools which generally have inadequate funding, fewer resources, and less experienced teachers. When minority students do attend more racially integrated schools, they are typically tracked in low-level less engaging classes. The teachers in these classes are generally less qualified and have fewer resources than their peers teaching college prep and AP classes.

According to Hammond, research shows that teacher quality does matter. She noted a study of North Carolina students which found that a one-percent increase in teacher quality correlated with a three-to-five percent decrease in the student failure rate. Other studies show that when all socio-economic factors are held constant, and minority and white students are both given high-quality, well-qualified teachers the racial gap in student achievement disappears.

Hammond concluded her lecture with what she called the "Marshall Plan for Teaching." The foundation of which is the creation of a scholarship based service program for teachers. The program would prepare 40,000 teachers for service in high-need subject areas such as math and science, and also for placement in high-need locations, at a cost of \$25,000 each. The cost would be \$1 billion or as Hammond put it, "what the U.S. spends in one day in Iraq."

For more information on AERA and the Hammond lecture please go to www.aera.net

UNDERSTANDING AND PROMOTING HEALTH LITERACY

Health literacy is a complex phenomenon that involves individuals, families, communities and systems. According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), low health literacy is a wide spread problem, affecting more than 90 million adults in the U.S. At the same time, the Department of Education finds that only 43 percent of adults demonstrate only the most basic or below-basic levels of prose literacy. Accordingly, this low health literacy in the American population results in patients' inadequate engagement in, and benefit from, health care advances as well as medical errors. The complex and cumbersome ways health information often is presented also contribute to the problem.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) are seeking research proposals designed to encourage empirical research on health literacy concepts, theory and interventions. Applications in response to the announcements, *Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy* ([PAR-07-018](#) and [PAR-07-019](#)), must involve at least one of the following:

- Health literacy, or one of its many components, as a key outcome;
- Health literacy as a key explanatory variable for some other outcome;
- Methodological or technological improvement to strengthen research on health literacy; and/or
- Prevention and/or intervention strategies that focus on health-literacy.

Researchers are encouraged to address health literacy as it pertains to prevention, healthy living, chronic disease management, patient-based health care, cultural competence, and health disparities.

NIH Institutes, Centers and Offices participating in the program announcement include: Cancer; Heart, Lung and Blood; Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering; Dental and Craniofacial Research; Environmental Health Sciences; Mental Health; Nursing; and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research. The announcement uses the NIH R21 grant mechanism.

The second program announcement, *Understanding and Promoting Health Literacy* ([PAR-07-019](#)), uses the NIH Small Research Grant (R03) award mechanism. The NIH R03 small grant is a mechanism for supporting discrete, well-defined projects that realistically can be completed in two years and that require limited levels of funding. The R03 mechanism should be used for support of pilot and/or feasibility studies for concepts that are sound and justifiable, but not sufficiently developed for the Research Project Grant (R01) mechanism. The R03 mechanism may also be appropriate for projects involving secondary analysis of existing data; small, self-contained research projects; development of research methodology; and the development of new research technology.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) including the National Centers for Health Marketing and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health join the NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices cited above along with the Office of Disease Prevention and the National Library of Medicine and AHRQ in support of the announcement.

NIH: FACILITATING INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

The National Institutes of Health is seeking applications designed to advance the understanding of health through development of new and innovative methodologies and technologies to support the interdisciplinary integration of social and/or behavioral scientific disciplines with other disciplines. The request for applications, Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research via Methodological and Technological Innovation in the Behavioral and Social Sciences ([RFA-RM-07-](#)

[004](#)), is part of the NIH Roadmap initiative. All NIH Institutes and Centers participate in NIH Roadmap initiatives and activities.

The initiative recognizes that the “behavioral and social sciences have offered significant, fundamental insights into the comprehensive understanding of human health, including knowledge of disease etiology, prevention, and treatment, and of factors critical to the promotion of health and well-being. Merging scientific insights and technologies gleaned from behavioral and social sciences with approaches from other scientific disciplines offer the promise of further advancing the public health mission of the NIH.”

It is further recognized that multidisciplinary research is not sufficient to address, in a comprehensive and effective way, challenging and complex problems in biomedical and behavioral research (such as obesity, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, mental illness, etc.). Rather these more complex problems may require interdisciplinary research which brings together different disciplines to address a particular issue. It differs from multidisciplinary research in that interdisciplinary research integrates concepts and techniques from the contributing disciplines in ways that produce new conceptual frameworks.

While the behavioral and social sciences have contributed greatly to the understanding, prevention, and treatment of many of today’s pressing health problems, there is growing recognition that with improved methodologies, behavioral and social sciences could do more to address the complexity of these problems. The initiative emphasizes that much behavioral research on health assumes that individual action is an important mechanism for understanding and changing social and health behaviors, but acknowledges that individuals are heavily influenced by actions occurring at other levels: from genomic, molecular, cellular, and organ systems, to family, workplace and community levels, to state, national, and global socioeconomic, environmental and geopolitical factors. Each additional layer of action requires more complex models. To understand the relationships among these multiple levels and to more fully explain their interactions, more sophisticated methodologies and technologies are needed.

NIH intends to commit approximately \$3 million dollars in FY 2007 to fund approximately 10 new grants in response to the request. The total project period for an application submitted may not exceed four years. Total costs are limited to \$1.2 million over a four-year period, with no more than \$300,000 in total costs in any single year. The earliest anticipated start date for awards is September 15, 2007. Letters of intent are due: **January 23, 2007**. Applications are due: **February 23, 2007**.

NIAAA: DIVISION OF EPIDEMIOLOGY AND PREVENTION RESEARCH RELEASES STRATEGIC PLAN

The Division of Epidemiology and Prevention Research (DEPR) of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) is pleased to announce the initial release of its Strategic Planning Document.

The document reviews the epidemiology and prevention research literature and identifies questions that merit research priority. The Institute-wide Strategic Plan was posted on the NIAAA website earlier this year. The DEPR Strategic Plan is the first Division Plan to be posted on the web.

The document was reviewed by NIAAA's Extramural Advisory Board (EAB) on August 16-17, 2006. On the basis of its review, the EAB will present a series of recommendations to the NIAAA National Advisory Council in February 2007. Observations and recommendations from

epidemiology and prevention researchers and others interested in this area of research are welcome. The DEPR Strategic Plan can be found on the NIAAA website at www.niaaa.nih.gov

Comments or suggestions can be sent to Ralph Hingson, Division Director, at rhingson@mail.nih.gov by December 8, 2006.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (**COSSA**) is an advocacy organization promoting attention to and federal support for the social and behavioral sciences.

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