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House Passes CJS Spending Bill: Amendments Eliminate NSF Political Science Program and American Community Survey

On May 10, the House of Representatives, by a vote of 247-163, passed the FY 2013 Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. Among the 36 successful amendments added to the bill, the House voted to prohibit the National Science Foundation from spending funds "to carry out the functions of the political science program." In addition, the House passed amendments to make the American Community Survey (ACS) voluntary and then to eliminate it altogether.

The Flake Amendment on Political Science

Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AZ) offered the amendment regarding NSF's political science program. A day earlier he had offered an unsuccessful amendment to reduce overall NSF spending by \$1.2 billion, taking the funding back to FY 2008 levels. The new amendment, which did not seek to reduce NSF's budget, succeeded on a roll-call vote of 218-208. Five Democrats joined 213 Republicans in favor, while 27 Republicans voted with 181 Democrats to keep the program. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), Chair of the CJS Appropriations Subcommittee, voted with the majority.

In offering his amendment, Flake noted that he had an advanced degree in political science (an

M.A. from Brigham Young), and he agreed "that such research has its benefits." He added: "The work of political scientists advances the knowledge and understanding of citizenship and government, politics, and this shouldn't be minimized." However, he argued, "they should not be subsidized by the National Science Foundation."

He claimed that most of the grants from the program "were directed to universities with endowments greater than \$1 billion." Flake further declared: "Would those who would oppose this amendment have believed that Harvard and Yale would have to close their political science departments if Federal grants are not available for this program?"

As happens often with these kinds of amendments, Flake then found some grants with which he could mock the program. Setting himself up as a one-man merit review panel, Flake decided he didn't like a grant to Mark Borusk of Dartmouth for \$700,000 to in Flake's words "develop a new model for international climate change analysis." Borusk is developing an Agent Based Modeling approach, (to study real-time interactions and decisions), that affect the outcome and implementation of international climate agreements. He will examine the "complex interplay of stakeholders at multiple levels who have limited ability to make optimal decisions and have differing beliefs, power, and incentive structures."

Another grant Flake didn't like was \$600,000 awarded to Lanny Martin of Rice University "to try to figure out if policymakers actually do what citizens want them to do." What Martin's project will examine is the impact of public opinion in multiparty parliamentary democracies where incentives encourage government parties to tailor policy to the wishes of narrow constituencies, whose policy views may or may not accord with those of the majority of voters. Martin seeks to study, what effect, if any, does public opinion have on democratic governance in these countries? If public sentiment changes direction, he asks, will the actions of elected officials follow? There are many examples of this currently occurring throughout Europe.

A third grant not meeting Flake's merit review standard was \$301,000 awarded to Jennifer Lawless of American University, who is concerned about the continuing low numbers of women in political office. She explains that "political scientists have come to conclude that the gender gap in political ambition is one of the most prominent explanations for women's under-representation, and that gender differences in interest in running for office are set in place prior to adulthood." Her study will examine socialization impacts in school on political ambition.

A final grant Flake criticized was \$200,000 to Robert Van Houweling of UC Berkeley that would analyze, in the congressman's view, "why political candidates make vague statements." The grant will allow Van Houweling to systematically examine how and on what issues candidates take ambiguous positions and to conduct an experiment on the consequences for voters of this vagueness.

Representative Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Ranking Member on the CJS Appropriations Subcommittee, tried to respond to Flake. He cited the political science program's 30 year history at NSF and noted that it is a very small portion of the overall NSF budget. He argued that: "It is important that we understand the political dynamics, radicalization of populations around the world, how political parties operate in the former Soviet Union, all of the other issues that are being studied" by the program. He also indicated that these awards passed through NSF's merit review system. Finally, he expressed his frustration with not just this attack on NSF, but a general feeling about what many of the Republican attacks on climate change science and other research pursuits are really about. Fattah declared: "Now, there's some advantage, I guess, politically to appear to be anti-intellectual, to have some desire to know little or less about what's going on in the world about us. But it is not worthy of a great Nation."

The House also adopted an amendment sponsored by Rep. Chip Cravaack (R-MN) that prohibited spending for a \$10 million climate change education program at NSF.

Despite the attack on political science and the Cravaack Amendment, except for another very small

reduction in NSF's administrative accounts, the full House maintained the funding level for FY 2013 recommended by the Appropriations Committee, close to almost \$300 million above FY 2012 level.

The Webster Amendment on ACS

As trust in the American government remains low, the willingness of some of its citizens to cooperate with its instruments of information collection, such as surveys, also declines. Thus, the American Community Survey (ACS)-which was inaugurated in 2005 to replace the long form of the decennial census, and required citizens to respond or face fines-became a target of attack.

Criticized as "intrusive" and asking Americans to respond to questions that were deemed "none of the government's business," Reps. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Trey Gowdy (R-SC) had already proposed legislation to make the ACS voluntary. They derided the mandatory requirement and its sanctions, even though they are rarely applied.

There was a hearing on the bill earlier in the year, before the Gowdy-chaired Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. At the hearing, witnesses from the American Enterprise Institute, the National Association of Realtors, and the Greater Houston Business Partnership all agreed that the costs in terms of statistical efficacy of making the ACS voluntary were great. Census Director Robert Groves warned the Subcommittee that a voluntary ACS would lead to higher costs to conduct the survey and make more difficult using the ACS as a test-bed for new approaches to the 2020 decennial. These new approaches are designed to meet the oft-stated order from Congress to reduce the cost of the 2020 count.

Seizing the chance to legislate on an appropriations bill, Poe and Gowdy introduced an amendment to the CJS bill to make the ACS voluntary. After the debate that focused on intrusiveness vs. the need for data collection on which to make informed public policy, with Rep. Fattah again holding down the fort for the ACS virtually alone, the amendment passed on a voice vote.

For Rep. Daniel Webster (R-FL), voluntariness was not enough; why not simply abolish the ACS. Webster based his argument on the notion that the ACS was unconstitutional. Despite the fact that, as Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), Ranking Member of the full Appropriations Committee pointed out, the ACS is authorized by law and has been upheld by the courts. Dicks informed the House that: "The ACS is authorized under Title 13, U.S. Code, the Census Act. On numerous occasions, the courts have judged that the Constitution gives Congress the authority to collect data on characteristics of the population in the census. As early as 1870, the Supreme Court characterized as unquestionable the power of Congress to require both an enumeration and the collection of data in the census."

Webster reiterated the "invasion of privacy" argument and the criticism of the 48 questions on the survey. His colleague Rep. James Lankford (R-OK), suggested folks getting the ACS in the mail would think: "Is this real or is this a scam artist trying to steal my information?" Fattah, calling the ACS "absolutely vital," countered that many of the same questions on the ACS are required by banks for people trying to get mortgages and that most people cooperate and fill out the ACS.

In a statement submitted to the Congressional Record, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) lashed out at the GOP majority before explaining the importance of the ACS: "Some have labeled the Majority the do nothing party. This amendment would make them the 'know nothing party.' The ACS is the only source of national, annual socioeconomic, housing, and demographic data. It is used by Congress to help allocate \$450 billion a year in federal grants to state and local governments, including the distribution of funds for veterans' job training programs and for improvements to low-income schools. The business community uses the ACS to help guide investment decisions like location and expansion plans. Congress has required, directly or indirectly, all of the data gathered in the ACS. The ACS passed with bipartisan support under the previous Administration to ensure greater accuracy and streamline the decennial census."

The vote was 232 to 190 in favor of abolishing the ACS so that the government can make decisions

about policy and allocations of funds without a significant source of information.

Other successful amendments that affected Census funding included a \$4 million reduction in Periodic Censuses and Programs to pay for increased funding for Drug Courts, offered by Rep. Gerald Lynch (D-MA), and a \$20 million shift, proposed by Rep. Corrine Brown (D-FL), from the Census Periodic account to increase funding for State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance. Another amendment, sponsored by Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME), that would have cost the Bureau \$38 million to increase funding for the Economic Development Administration, was unsuccessful.

Furthermore, an amendment to reduce all accounts in the bill by one percent, introduced by Rep. Marsha Blackburn (R-TN), failed as did an amendment offered by Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA) that would have reduced by 12.2 percent spending for all accounts in the bill with the exception of the FBI, NASA, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

What's Next

The CJS bill that emerged from the Senate Appropriations Committee may come to the Senate floor the week of May 14. Although nothing is definitive, in 2009 Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) offered an amendment to abolish NSF's Political Science program. With strong support from CJS Appropriations Subcommittee Chair Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Coburn's amendment was defeated by a vote of 36-62. The chances of Coburn or someone else offering another such amendment in 2012 are considered high. Like the House under its Open Rule, the Senate allows its members to offer amendments at any time during consideration of the bill without making them public beforehand.

With regard to the Census, the Senate has come in with a higher funding recommendation number and the Chair appears to oppose any attempt to abolish the ACS.

Another factor is that the House loaded its bill with amendments restricting the Justice Department's ability to intervene in court cases regarding the Affordable Care Act and state immigration laws as well as others that restrict the Administration's ability to make policy. The Administration would regard these as veto bait in addition to its already stated veto threat based on the House disregarding the discretionary spending number set in last year's budget agreement.

For the link to the debate and roll call votes on the Flake and Webster amendments go to:

www.cossa.org.

Paul Volcker Receives Moynihan Prize from AAPSS



The American Academy of Political and Social Science (AAPSS) presented its Daniel Patrick Moynihan prize for 2011 to Paul A. Volcker in a ceremony at the Ronald Reagan building in Washington, DC. Before the presentation, MSNBC Host and former Moynihan staffer Lawrence O'Donnell told the audience that the late New York Senator had succeeded in obtaining congressional funding for the building by putting Reagan's name on the edifice. Volcker was introduced by the first recipient of the Moynihan Prize, Alice Rivlin, former director of the Office of Management and Budget and now a Senior Fellow in Economics at the Brookings Institution.

The Academy honored Volcker for his long career in government starting at the New York Federal Reserve bank in 1952. He also served at the Treasury Department and, most famously, as the two-term Chairman of the Federal Reserve System from 1979 to 1987. As Fed Chairman, Volcker receives credit for ending the stagflation that plagued the Carter Administration and restoring the U.S. economy while sending it on the low-inflation path that continues to this day. He has also received plaudits for his work leading various civic activities: a Commission on Public Service; another panel

charged with finding dormant accounts and other assets in Swiss banks for victims of Nazi Persecution; and a Board of Inquiry that examined the scandal-plagued United Nations Oil-for-Food program. From 2008-2011 he was chairman of President Obama's Economy Recovery Board. In a brief acceptance speech, Volcker deplored the current state of American policy making, particularly in the Congress. He was especially critical of the long delays in the confirmation process for presidential appointees.

AAPSS also honored, by naming them Fellows, a number of other scholars whose work has impacted public policy. Columbia Professor Michael Doyle was named the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Fellow for his work with the U.N. Robert Jervis, also of Columbia, was honored as the Robert Dahl Fellow for his work on the political psychology of international relations. Roberto Fernandez of MIT was this year's Samuel Stouffer Fellow for his work on organizations and social networks' impact on employment. James S. Jackson, director of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan and a former COSSA Board Member and Annual Meeting Speaker, was named the W.E.B. DuBois Fellow for his research on Black Americans (for a summary of that work, see Update, [November 10, 2011](#)).

Lawrence Katz of Harvard was this year's John Kenneth Galbraith Fellow for his work on the economics of social problems, particularly U.S. inequality. Alejandro Portes of Princeton, and a former COSSA Board Member, was named the James S. Coleman Fellow for his work on international migration and the impact of immigration to the U.S.; and Beth Simmons of Harvard, and a former COSSA congressional seminar speaker, was honored as the Edward Kennedy Fellow for her work on human rights and international law.

Founded in December 1889, the AAPSS is one of the nation's oldest learned societies, and is dedicated to the use of social science to address important social problems. It publishes *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Princeton Sociologist Douglas Massey is AAPSS' President. Tom Kecskemethy is the AAPSS' new Executive Director. He came to the Academy from the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education where he was Assistant Dean and Director of Communications.

CDC Conference Examines "The Weight of the Nation:" IOM Issues Obesity Report

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) held a three day conference May 7-9 on *The Weight of the Nation*. The event was jammed with sessions on a large variety of issues, but perhaps the biggest story to come out of the conference was the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) release of a new report on *Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation*. The 400-page report, designed to provide ideas on how to accelerate progress towards obesity prevention in the next decade, speaks to hotly contested policy issues of the moment and has created strong, yet varied, reactions among the nutrition community, food industry representatives, and legislators.

The report and its proposals come after a careful evaluation of prior obesity-prevention strategies. Dan Glickman, Agriculture secretary during the Clinton administration and former Democratic Representative from Kansas, led the Committee in its quest. Before laying out its findings, the report acknowledges the health crisis that necessitated it, noting "the substantial and long-term human and societal costs of obesity, the great difficulty of treating this problem once it has developed, and the relatively slow progress made thus far in turning the national obesity numbers around underline the urgent need to develop a plan for accelerating progress in obesity prevention."

Recommendations in the report are aimed at the food industry, government agencies and state, local and federal legislators and are proposed as a mix of voluntary guidelines and mandatory rules. In one of its more controversial recommendations, the report calls for the food industry to step up and implement voluntary marketing and advertising changes to children consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. If the food industry fails to act of its own free will, the report recommends that Congress should consider stepping in with-what would be landmark-legislation.

The report also indicates that Congress should consider retooling federal agricultural policies, if need be, to provide more healthy foods for Americans. In another controversial point, the IOM report encourages legislators to consider a tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, such as soda. Researchers also noted that state and local excise taxes may be enough to reduce beverage consumption. The topic of taxing soda has come up recently in many states, most notably New York, but has repeatedly been shot down. The report notes that sugar-sweetened beverages, from energy drinks to colas, are the single largest source of calories and added sugars in the American diet. Glickman was careful to note, however, that the report did not definitively call on Congress to put a tax in place on sugar-sweetened drinks, rather he said, "I think we said it should be in the panoply of options for governments to review."

Crop subsidies aimed at large commodity crops like corn are a frequent target of blame for some working on the problem of obesity. While the report did not find a direct link between subsidies and obesity, Glickman said that the committee believes legislators should examine federal policies that discourage the planting of fruits and vegetables, often referred to as "specialty crops."

Glickman pragmatically noted that the budget concerns, in the end, will most likely spur Congress to deal with obesity issues. Indeed, the health care costs associated with the rising obesity epidemic are astronomical, as more and more Americans deal with obesity and co-morbid conditions for life, beginning in childhood. Glickman noted that "the fastest-growing part of the federal budget is health care costs. What we find here that to deal with the deficit and to deal with debt, controlling health care costs is part of it."

For more information on this report, or to read it yourself, please go to the IOM's website [here](#).

Ramaswamy Takes Over at NIFA

On May 9, the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced Sonny Ramaswamy as its new director. President Obama declared his intention to appoint Ramaswamy in March.

Ramaswamy comes to NIFA from Oregon State University (OSU), where he served as dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences since 2009. While at OSU, he led the college's academic programs and directed the research programs at the main campus and at 11 branch experiment stations. Bolstering his land-grant credentials, Ramaswamy held faculty positions at other universities in addition to his time at OSU.

Catherine Woteki, USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics said of the new director, "Equipped with leadership capabilities and research expertise, Sonny is certainly well-prepared for his new position and I know he is looking forward to the days ahead."

Chavonda Jacobs-Young steps down from the position of acting director as Ramaswamy begins at NIFA. Jacobs-Young was the first Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist in the U.S. Department of Agriculture before her time at NIFA's helm.

For more information about the new director, or NIFA in general, please visit their website [here](#).

Lead Poisoning and Health Disparities Focus of Briefing

On May 10, a lunchtime briefing organized by the Health and Medicine Counsel of Washington was held in the Capitol Visitor Center on: "Targeted Approaches to Reach Those Most at Risk for Lead Poisoning: a Known Contributor to Minority Health Disparities & the Achievement Gap." The briefing was held chiefly to inform Congressional staffers and the public of the great need for research funding to prevent this disease.

Joel Forman, former member of Center for Disease Control (CDC) Advisory Committee on Childhood

Lead Poisoning Prevention Lead and Pregnancy Work Group, explained that lead poisoning, contrary to many people's beliefs, is far from eradicated. Severe cases are almost never seen anymore, but the sub-issues associated with lower levels of lead poisoning, from paint in old buildings and other environmental sources, are a serious problem still sickening members of our society today. Lead poisoning, according to Forman, lowers intelligence in children, increases behavior problems, increases the incidence of premature birth, and raises maternal blood pressure amongst other insidious consequences. Forman noted that there are no safe levels of lead exposure, no matter how low the levels of exposure might be. Underlining the need for more screenings, he noted just how much children can be helped if they are screened and the problem is detected early.

Marjorie Coons, a public health nurse in Wisconsin and advocate for lead poisoning prevention, spoke to the necessity of having a strong infrastructure in place to respond to children with elevated levels of lead and echoed Forman's call for increased screenings to find these children in the first place. Her points were strongly supported by Ralph Spezio, who served 33 years as a teacher and Principal in Rochester, New York schools. As principal of a school in the grips of severe poverty and behavioral problems, he initiated wide-ranging partnerships and ground-breaking programs to improve the health and well-being of students and the community. He discovered the severe problem of lead poisoning within his student body by chance. Many of his children had high levels of the substance, explaining no doubt contributing to their behavioral problems, and a full 100 percent of the special education students at his school had been exposed to lead poisoning. He declared that we must identify children as early as possible so they can reach the full potential they deserve. He named CDC as a critical partner in this process, noting that it must remain at a full funding level to help combat this danger to children. Spezio emphasized that, in addition, full data on communities is vital to the kind of targeted testing that really helps children.

During the briefing's question segment concern was raised about funding levels for CDC's Healthy Homes Program. According to panelists, funding dropped from \$25 million to \$2 million FY 2012, which has been a difficult to bear for the program and without increased funds for this program, data and analysis will be lost. The targeted testing that can really help at-risk children cannot happen without this data. Furthermore, staff physicians across the states will be out of the job along with caseworkers. Panelists emphasized how vital it was that CDC receives full funding.

Fogarty Seeks Input on its Strategic Plan

The Fogarty International Center is updating its strategic plan. Accordingly, it seeks input from scientists, the general public, and interested parties. Fogarty is further seeking to identify current and future needs and directions for global health research and research training.

The Center request comments that are specifically, but not exclusively, on the following topics:

- What are specific gaps, needs and opportunities in global health research that should be addressed by Fogarty in the next 5-10 years?
- What are specific gaps, needs, and opportunities in global health research training that should be addressed by Fogarty in the next 5-10 years?
- Are there specific gaps and/or opportunities related to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), mobile technologies (mHealth), and distance learning in research and research training?
- What are specific gaps, needs, and opportunities related to research and research training in chronic, non-communicable diseases?
- What are specific gaps, needs, and opportunities related to research and research training in infectious diseases?
- How can Fogarty strengthen the research-enabling environment at research institutions in low and middle income countries?
- How can Fogarty encourage more collaboration in research and research training among institutions in low and middle income countries?

To view the existing FIC strategic plan, see: <http://www.fic.nih.gov/About/Pages/Strategic-Plan.aspx>.

Inquiries should be directed to: Rachel Sturke, Division of International Science Policy, Planning and Evaluation, 301-480-6025; or FICStratPlan@mail.nih.gov; or <http://www.fic.nih.gov>.

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