



# COSSA

## Washington UPDATE



July 8, 2013    Volume 32, Issue 12



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### **FY 2014 Appropriations Process Moves Forward**

With Congress' return from Independence Day recess, it intends to resume its consideration of the FY 2014 spending bills. This will happen despite the House and Senate moving on parallel paths that are quite far apart. The House is operating under its Budget Resolution that sets overall spending for discretionary programs at \$967 billion. This assumes that sequestration will continue. The Senate is proceeding under its Budget Resolution, which sets overall spending for discretionary programs at \$1.058 trillion. Following the lead of the President's budget proposal, it assumes sequestration will

not continue.

So far, the House has approved two of the twelve spending bills-- Homeland Security and Military Construction/Veterans' Affairs. Its full appropriations committee, chaired by Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY), has agreed on its recommendations for four others: Agriculture, Defense, Energy and Water, and Transportation/HUD. In moving these six bills, the House has followed the allocations to its Subcommittees that have provided significantly more funding for the defense and homeland security portions of the budget, while creating shortages for the non-security domestic discretionary bills. The Senate has accused the House of breaking the Budget Control Act's (BCA) provisions that set specific caps for security vs. non-security spending.

The House claims that by using the \$1.058 trillion figure and ignoring the continuing sequestration, the Senate is also flouting the BCA. The Senate Appropriations Committee, chaired by Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), has marked up four bills, Agriculture, Energy and Water, Military Construction/Veterans' Affairs, and Transportation/HUD. None of the four have made it to the Senate floor yet.

### **CJS This Week in House, Next Week in Senate; Labor HHS, ED This Week in Senate**

The House expects to continue to move ahead with markups at the Subcommittee level of the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) spending bill on July 10. The CJS bill will include the first FY 2014 marks for the National Science Foundation, the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the National Institute of Justice, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. That same day the Financial Services bill will get marked up at the Subcommittee level. A day earlier, a Subcommittee will make recommendations for the Legislative Branch spending bill.

On the Senate side, the Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education (ED) Appropriations bill is scheduled for markup in the Subcommittee on July 9 and at the full Appropriations Committee on July 11. According to a preliminary schedule, the CJS Subcommittee will provide its recommendations on July 16 with the full committee two days later. The CJS spending recommendations on the Senate side are expected to exceed the House levels for CJS programs, since the allocation provides about \$5 billion more for the Senate panel to distribute compared to the House. That body will likely postpone as long as possible its markup of the Labor, HHS, ED bill since the allocation would appear to force some major reductions in programs that have considerable outside support.

When the differences in the bills might get resolved is mighty uncertain at this point. There is a sense that a probable debt ceiling debate in November could lead to a solution regarding the spending bills. If this happens, another Continuing Resolution (CR) would become necessary at the beginning of FY 2014 on October 1, 2013.

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## **Agriculture Bills Reflect House-Senate Differences**

As noted above, the House and Senate FY 2014 spending figures are quite different. This is quite evident if one compares the recommendations of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees regarding the research and data components of the Agriculture and Rural Development bill.

For the Economic Research Service (ERS), the Senate panel provided the President's requested level of \$78.5 million as compared to the House committee recommendation of \$75.5 million. The House Committee also directed ERS "to coordinate USDA's agencies involved in data collection, analysis, and research to make available the best data related to the production, pricing, distribution, and marketing of locally and regionally produced agricultural products and to identify data gaps." The Senate panel also expressed interest in this area, although its directive was less wordy.

The Senate allocated \$162.1 million to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) compared to the House level of \$154.8 million. Within these figures, the Senate Committee provided almost

\$2.5 million more than the House to complete the Census of Agriculture. The Senate panel also made it clear that the additional funds would allow NASS to resume or begin compilation of reports that had been suspended or eliminated since FY 2012 because of budget constraints. The Committee now expects these reports "at the frequency levels assumed in fiscal year 2012," and it is "directed to resume all of these reports immediately upon enactment of this act."

The National Institute on Food and Agriculture (NIFA) received \$772.8 million from the Senate committee and \$718.7 million from the House panel for its research, education, and extension activities in FY 2014. The Agriculture Research and Food Initiative (AFRI) was allotted \$316.4 million by the Senate and \$290.5 million by the House. Both are considerably below the President's FY 2014 request of \$383.4 million. More differences are seen in the recommendations for the Hatch Act Formula Grants program: \$236.3 million, the President's number, by the House; but \$243.7 million by the Senate.

Both the House and Senate Committees agreed to FY 2014 funding of \$998,000 for the Regional Research and Development Centers, the same as the President's request. The Committees in both Houses added report language about regional research. The House noted that "State and regional research has a history of success in addressing critical pest, disease, and production problems specific to their region, and that these programs help producers across the Nation remain productive." The Senate report "encourages NIFA to consider providing funding within AFRI to assist with State and regional research priorities, with USDA oversight and review."

The House had planned to bring its Agriculture and Rural Development FY 2014 Appropriations bill to the floor before the July 4<sup>th</sup> recess. That did not happen. It does not appear on the floor schedule for the week of July 8<sup>th</sup> as the House will consider the Energy and Water spending bill that week. The Senate floor schedule for spending bills remains uncertain.

On the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) FY 2014 Appropriations bill, the House rejected the President's budget cut of \$9 million for the University Programs and Centers of Excellence. As they have in previous years, the report directed the DHS "to brief the Committee on the method used to measure performance of the Centers not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act."

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## **NSF Publishes FY 2013 Current Plan Numbers**

Nine months into the fiscal year and three months following the enactment of the FY 2013 final appropriations bill, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has published the spending figures for the current fiscal year. Part of the recent delay results from the need to obtain approval from the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for the distributions.

For the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate, the total is \$242.5 million. The comparable FY 2012 figure is \$254.2 million. The cut from FY 2012 is slightly under the five percent sequestration number. The FY 2013 request was \$259.6 million. Sequestration and budget cuts have consequences!

Within SBE, the Social and Economic Sciences division went from \$97.3 million to \$91.7 million. For the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences division, the reduction was to \$88.6 million from \$92.5 million in FY 2012. The National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics received \$34.8 million in FY 2013 compared to \$36.2 million in FY 2012. The SBE Office of Multidisciplinary Activities was allotted \$27.5 million, down from \$28.2 million in FY 2012.

The FY 2013 Appropriation for the Education and Human Resources directorate was \$833.3 million after sequestration, a slight increase over the \$830.5 million allocated in FY 2012. The Research on Learning in Formal and Informal Settings received \$280.3 million in FY 2013 compared to \$273.2 million in FY 2012.

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## **SMRB Assesses the Value of Biomedical Research; Gets New Charge**

At its 16<sup>th</sup> meeting in June, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) reviewed the Working Group on the Value of Biomedical Research's (VOBR) process and progress. SMRB chair Norman Augustine noted that the working group has been fulfilling its charge and had "a good deal to report." The SMRB is mandated to meet at least five times on each topic as a total group before making a recommendation. The meeting's agenda included a discussion of the principles, metrics, strategies, and caveats of how to assess the value of biomedical research; the public health outputs and outcomes of biomedical research; the broader societal impacts of biomedical research; and presentation of the "Value of Federally-Funded Biomedical Research in the Development of Medical Interventions and Treatments" by former NIH director Elias Zerhouni.

The SMRB was also given a new charge to "recommend ways to further optimize the process of reviewing and awarding grants." In addressing this charge, the SMRB is asked to consider how NIH can: (1) Streamline the grant-making process and shorten the length of time from application to allocation of funds, and (2) Address the administrative burden on applicants and their institutions, scientific reviewers, Council members, and NIH staff while maintaining a high-quality review process. The agency further requested that the SMRB provide the fundamental principles that should underpin any recommended changes to the process; a comprehensive analysis of each step in the process; and recommended strategies and options for improving the process, as well as the rationale for these recommendations.

The rationale for the new charge to the SMRB is that the agency's two-tier review system is the foundation on which the agency's funding of extramural research is based and the majority of the NIH budget goes to extramural research grants. According to Principal Deputy Director Lawrence Tabak when presenting the charge, it "is vital that NIH continue to innovate and optimize the process by which grant applications are submitted, reviewed, processed, and awarded." Tabak pointed out that today, the research enterprise faces additional challenges due to economic constraints that have resulted in decreases in application success rate (See [Update, June 24, 2013](#)). At the same time, advances in technology may be capitalized on to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness in grant awarding process, he stated.

### **Tabak Thanks Board for Assessment Advice**

Tabak, who was filling in for NIH director Francis Collins for the first day of the two-day meeting, personally thanked the SMRB for taking on the charge to provide the NIH advice on assessing the value of biomedical research. The NIH is entrusted with much of the public's investment in biomedical research and as such "the NIH is responsible for ensuring that these funds are used in ways that provide value to the public, and the current economic climate simply underscores the need to demonstrate to all unambiguously the value of investing in NIH," Tabak stated. In July 2012, Collins issued a charge to the SMRB to identify appropriate parameters and approaches for assessing and communicating the value of biomedical research supported by NIH.

VOBR Working Group chair Gail Cassell, Eli Lilly and Company, reviewed the Working Group's activities including "a very thorough literature review." The Working Group is focusing on three types of value: the accumulation of scientific knowledge, how that knowledge translates into improved public health, and how scientific knowledge transitions into broader societal effect, primarily economic, but also including educational, diplomatic, and other types of value that don't necessarily always get taken into account. Cassell noted the difficulty of placing a value on the importance of scientific diplomacy without the acquisition of new knowledge. There is a continuum, argued Cassell, from the accumulation of basic knowledge that then leads to improved interventions, improved health, and lastly, to broader societal impacts.

Zerhouni, who was asked to share the perspective of industry, noted that he was happy that the SMRB was addressing this very difficult topic. He reflected that during his tenure as director, the

question that he was constantly "bombarded" with from Congress was: What are we getting for the \$30 billion we are investing in NIH? The former director noted that the notion of value changes with time and what is of medical value for one person is not necessarily the same for someone else.

Zerhouni stated that "value depends on the moment in time societies are in. If you are in a period of poor life expectancy and bad health results, value is going to be very different than if you are in the period of longer life expectancy and budgets higher than the economic growth," he said. From his point of view, the product of federal funding should be knowledge, not products. Clearly, said Zerhouni, the immediate mission of the NIH and how it defines itself has an impact on what society is expecting and that is the reduction of the burden of disease and burden of healthcare costs.

He discussed translation of research and how T-1 translation, described as being at the edge of understanding a process or disease biology, is very different from T-4 translation where you have developed knowledge, a product, and a system of delivery. It is the difference between these two stages that are getting mixed up in the public debate, Zerhouni asserted. People are asking why the NIH is spending money on health outcomes or economics as opposed to spending it on understanding cancer, he noted. He reflected back on his tenure as director when he responded to Congress' concern regarding NIH's "ability to study behavioral problems...But behavioral problems are 50 percent of the disease burden." He encouraged the Working Group to look at the mission of the NIH according to what is the conversion of value between knowledge generation and true societal benefit as a function of the true challenge at the T-1 translation stage, the generating of validated ideas that can then be used to test whether or not they will influence disease.

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## Sound Science Integral to Obama's Climate Plan

In a speech at Georgetown University on June 25, President Obama announced an [action plan](#) to combat the effects of climate change. Obama asserted that the science has already spoken regarding the certainty of climate change and that "the question now is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late." The plan, which the administration describes as a "blueprint for steady, responsible national and international action to slow the effects of climate change" consists of three strategies for mitigating and preparing for global change: 1) Cut carbon pollution in America, 2) Prepare the United States for the impacts of climate change, and 3) Lead international efforts to combat global climate change and prepare for its impacts.

As part of its climate change preparation strategy, the administration pledges to "lead in advancing the science of climate measurement and adaptation and the development of tools for climate-relevant decision-making by focusing on increasing the availability, accessibility, and utility of relevant scientific tools and information." The plan calls for developing actionable climate science, primarily through the U.S. Global Change Research Program (USGCRP); the President's proposed Fiscal Year 2014 budget provides over \$2.7 billion to climate science. Specific areas of focus include: understanding climate-change impacts, risk and catastrophe modeling, and developing information and tools to assist decision-makers in responding to both long- and short-term climate impacts. The action plan affirms the importance of the next National Climate Assessment, scheduled for release in spring 2014 (see [Update, February 11, 2013](#)), which will, for the first time, translate the scientific information to aid decision-makers in anticipating and preparing for the impacts of global change.

In keeping with the administration's open data policy (see [Update, May 28, 2013](#)), the plan pledges the creation of a Climate Data Initiative, which will "leverage extensive federal climate-relevant data to stimulate innovation and private-sector entrepreneurship in support of national climate-change preparedness." The administration also plans to create a climate resilience toolkit to centralize new and existing tools, services, and best practices (including those developed through the Climate Data Initiative).

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## President Nominates Katherine O'Regan to lead HUD's Policy and

## Research Office

On June 27, President Obama nominated Katherine O'Regan, Associate Professor of Public Policy at the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University, as the next Assistant Secretary of the Office of Policy Development and Research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



If confirmed by the Senate, she would replace Raphael Bostic, who returned to the University of Southern California in October 2012 as the new director of the Judith and John Bedrosian Center on Governance and the Public Enterprise, a research center that promotes effective governance at all levels.

While at the Wagner School O'Regan has been Director of the Public and Nonprofit Masters' program, Co-Director of the Taub Center for Urban Policy Research, and Associate Dean of Faculty and Academic Affairs.

Before coming to NYU in 2000, she spent ten years teaching at the Yale School of Management. During her time at Yale, she also served as a visiting scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and as a guest scholar at the Economic Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. She has also been an analyst in the Office of Hearings and Appeals at the U.S. Department of Energy.

O'Regan has served on the Boards of the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association, the Reinvestment Fund, and the editorial board for the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.

According to her NYU biography, her primary research interests are at the intersection of poverty and space-- the conditions and fortunes of poor neighborhoods and those who live in them. Her current research includes work on a variety of affordable housing topics, from whether the Low Income Tax Credit contributes to increased economic and racial segregation, to whether the presence of housing voucher households contributes to neighborhood crime rates. Recent work also includes a large project (with Ingrid Gould Ellen) examining neighborhood transitions over the past few decades, including possible broad causes, such as changes in federal housing policy, and changes in crime, in particular, and outcomes, including possible displacement, and improvements in neighborhood conditions.

She has a B.S. from the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

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## Howard Shelanski New Head of OIRA



On June 29, the Senate confirmed Georgetown Law Professor Howard Shelanski as the new head of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the White House Office of Management and Budget. Shelanski replaces Cass Sunstein.

OIRA plays an essential role in developing and overseeing the implementation of government-wide policies on regulation, information collection, information quality and technology, statistical standards, scientific evidence, and privacy. It also houses the Office of Statistical Policy led by Katherine Wallman.

Shelanski joined the Georgetown Law Faculty in 2011 after 14 years at the University of California, Berkeley. While at Berkeley he served as Associate Dean and a co-director of its Center for Law and Technology.

Before going to Berkeley, Shelanski practiced law with the Washington, D.C. firm Kellogg Huber Hansen Todd & Evans. He also clerked for Judge Stephen F. Williams of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, Judge Louis H. Pollak of the U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, and Justice Antonin Scalia of the United States Supreme Court.

Shelanski has taken leave from teaching to work in government on several occasions. Since July 2012, he has been on leave from Georgetown to serve as Director of the Bureau of Economics at the Federal Trade Commission, where he previously served as Deputy Director from 2009-2011. From 1999-2000 he was Chief Economist of the Federal Communications Commission and from 1998-1999 he served as a Senior Economist for the President's Council of Economic Advisers at the White House.

His recent law review articles include: *Justice Breyer, Professor Kahn, and Antitrust Enforcement in Regulated Industries*; *The Case for Rebalancing Antitrust and Regulation*, and *Enforcing Competition During an Economic Crisis*.

He has a B.A. from Haverford College and a J.D. and Ph.D. in economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

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## Results of "The Nation's Report Card" Released for 2012

The results of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Long-Term Trend Assessment, [The Nation's Report Card: Trends in Academic Progress 2012](#), were released in late June. Jack Buckley, Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics and 2012 COSSA Colloquium speaker, presented the results of the assessment during a recent webinar. Buckley explained that the Long-Term Trend Assessment differs from the main NAEP test in that it is administered every four years (as opposed to every two years), selects students by age (not grade level), and measures performance, not achievement (main NAEP rates achievement level on a basic-proficient-advanced rubric). Both tests assess math and reading performance (although they differ in the skills they measure). The Long-Term Trend Assessment has been administered since 1971 for reading and 1973 for math.

Reading scores for 9- and 13-year-olds made a statistically significant improvement since 1971. Scores for 13-year-olds also improved since the last round of assessment in 2008. Overall, scores for 17-year-olds have remained stable; however, the scores of the lowest-performing cohorts (in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentiles) rose since 1971. In all three age groups, African American and Hispanic students made larger gains than their White counterparts, indicating progress in closing the achievement gap between White and minority students. However, these groups are still underperforming. In 1971, 9-year-old girls outscored boys in reading by 13 points; in 2012, that gap decreased to 5 points.

As with reading, math scores have improved significantly for the younger age groups since 1973, while remaining stable for 17-year-olds. In 2012, 13-year-olds had the highest average score ever (and was the only age group to make a significant improvement since the last assessment four years ago). The bottom 10 percent of 13-year-olds scored better in 2012 than higher achieving (25<sup>th</sup> percentile) 13-year-olds in 1978. Following a similar pattern to the reading scores, African American and Hispanic students at all age groups have improved more since 1973 than White students, though the achievement gap is still significant. In the 17-year-old cohort, the gender gap of boys outperforming girls has narrowed from eight points in 1973 to four points in 2012.

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## NAS Committee on Law and Justice Holds Roundtable on Crime Trends

The continuing reductions in crime rates over the past two decades have raised numerous questions about causation. On June 25 and 26, the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) Committee on Law and Justice hosted a roundtable on these trends. This was the first of six meetings to take place over three years. The roundtable, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice, will focus its attention on addressing the basic conceptual and theoretical issues associated with explaining changes in crime rates over time. In addition to identifying and examining current theories of contributing factors, the group will work to develop new theories and the methods through which

they can be tested. Richard Rosenfeld, University of Missouri, St. Louis, is the chairman.

The first meeting was convened with the purpose of providing the context for current crime trend theories. The roundtable, comprised of eight scholars who study crime trends and six experts from the policy and practitioner areas, presented on and discussed theories that addressed social, environmental, economic, and historical trends as they related to crime in the United States and around the world. Ohio State University professor Randolph Roth addressed the committee members on the general history of homicide in the United States. More specifically, Roth focused on the difficulty that researchers face when trying to gain a comprehensive understanding of homicide because of the lack of historical data. While it is relatively easy to search over the death records in a specific town or county, Roth found that there was very inconsistent data within the two major crime data aggregation sources (the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting and the National Center for Health Statistics). Even with the inconsistent data, Roth was able to identify some factors that he believes affect homicide rates within the United States, including political stability, faith in the current social hierarchy, and the presence of a legitimate government.

Manuel Eisner, University of Cambridge, followed up with a historical analysis of crime in Northern and Eastern Europe. His analysis closely mirrored Roth's and showed that many nations experienced heightened rates of homicides and assaults when there were low levels of political stability and faith in government.

Rosenfeld presented some of the crime trend theories that address economic factors. He explained that economic downturns are often credited with an increase of violent and property crimes. While not discounting the economic factors, Rosenfeld argued that the way in which the data was being collected was unreliable. For example, he said, the recent recession that started in 2007 was expected to cause crime rates to increase. To the surprise of many experts, crime rates actually continued to decrease, albeit slower than before. Rosenfeld suggested that using inflation rates as an alternative indicator to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or the Consumer Price Index would offer a better way of relating economic data to crime statistics.

### **Bushway Explains "Random Walk" Theory**

Shawn Bushway, State University of New York, Albany, explained the "random walk" theory. The random walk theory holds that crime trends are not as cyclical and predictable as many experts think. By comparing the data of one year to that of another, Bushway explained, it is nearly impossible to get an accurate prediction of future trends. This theory is based on the notion that there are simply too many factors that are constantly changing to get an accurate prediction.

Eric Baumer, Florida State University, shared his thoughts on how to effectively measure crime. He argued that even after many years of advanced and well-funded research, we still are unable to establish a consensus on the best ways to measure crime. Baumer explained that there is a natural dilemma of balancing generalizability with accuracy and consistency. After comparing many of the different units of measurement, Baumer came up with a few recommendations. First, there is a need for longitudinal neighborhood based data. Additionally, it may be beneficial to look back at National Neighborhood Crime Study (NNCS) and National Foreclosure and Crime Database (NFCD) data. There is already data from the 2000's but Baumer believes that data from the 1990's will offer a lot more insight.

David Weisburd, George Mason University and Hebrew University, presented on the importance of using micro geographic units for measuring crime. Weisburd explained that a lot of local crime data can be misleading because large percentages of total crime will often occur in only a few areas within a city. For example, in New York City in 2009 and 2010, 1% of the street segments were responsible for over 24% of total crime in the city. That is a staggering number that, if studied and utilized, can certainly help researchers gain a better understanding of what causes crime.

Maria Velez, University of New Mexico, also addressed local crime indicators and how they relate to the overall crime rates in a given city or region. Velez explained that aggregate crime data

certainly indicates that while crime rates are falling, there are still many neighborhoods within cities that are experiencing crime rate stagnation or even increases. Even within certain neighborhoods, Velez argued, it is important to collect data that shows the changing demographics and cultural context of a specific time. Changes in the ethnic and cultural makeup, political turnover, and new policies can all be studied to gain a better understanding of the crime rates.

Janet Lauristen, University of Missouri, St. Louis, made the case for studying the race, age, gender, and ethnicity of the victims of crimes. This information became more widely available in the 1990's but is still difficult to aggregate from the Supplementary Homicide Report (SHR) and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) because of often incomplete or inaccurate reporting. As a result, researchers are more likely to National Crime Victim Survey (NCVS) data to study victim demographics. This is a more holistic approach to crime research as it addresses multiple parties rather than just the offender.

### **Herman Stresses Importance of Data Collection on Crime Victims**

Susan Herman, Pace University, stressed the importance of collecting data on crime victims in addition to the offenders. More than just keeping track of who fell victim to criminal acts, Herman believes that it is important to learn about victims' ethnicity, the services that were subsequently offered to them, and any relationship to the offender. Additionally, she suggested, there seems to be a lack of data regarding the relationship between poverty and victimization. Gathering and analyzing this data could, according to Herman, deliver a more comprehensive understanding of crime trends.

Eisner once again addressed the committee to make the case utilizing an international historical framework for crime. More specifically, Eisner discussed the homicide rates in Europe over the past 1500 years. While acknowledging that there are over 15 current theories for the decline in homicide in Europe over the past 1500 years, Eisner makes the case that it cannot simply be coincidence all of the nations have lower homicide rates than they did in their earlier years. Knowing this, Eisner discussed the merits of aggregating all of the data verses studying the 22 nations individually. He concluded that whether the data is aggregated or not, all of the theories need to be tested for a comprehensive understanding.

Roth concluded the meeting with a presentation on the importance of including political context to aggregate crime data, particularly when using a historical comparison. Roth presented data from the former Soviet Union to show how nearly all of the new nations were able to keep up with the rest of Europe in the 1990s as far as crime rate declines. Albania served as an outlier when it experienced a massive increase in homicides in the mid-1990s as a result of localized economic and political instability. Nations around it did not experience this same instability, therefore their homicide rates did not increase.

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## **Webinar Focuses on Native American Male Health Disparities**

On June 13, the Men's Health Network, Indian Health Service (IHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Office of Minority Health (OMH) and Society of Public Health Education (SOPHE) presented a webinar, "Partnering for Wellness: Charting a Course to Hope, Healing and Health for Native Males and Their Families," which focused on health disparities experienced by American Indian and Alaska Native (Indian) males.

Mose Herne, IHS, gave an overview of the health disparities faced by this population. He observed that efforts to reduce these disparities can build on past success at improving mortality rates for Indian populations across a number of categories. Since 1973, the mortality rates for tuberculosis, infant deaths, accidental death, cerebrovascular disease, pneumonia/influenza, maternal disease, heart disease, and suicide have all dropped significantly for Indian populations. However, Herne noted, Indian populations still experience higher mortality rates for these causes of death than the general U.S. population. In particular, mortality from alcohol-induced causes is 6.5 times higher for

Indians than the general population; death from diabetes is 2.8 times higher; and accidental deaths are 2.4 times higher.

Many of these disparities are even more pronounced in the Indian male population. Alcohol-related mortality, deaths due to diabetes and heart disease, and suicide are all much higher for Indian men than women. Native American men also report psychological distress and feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness in much greater numbers than their non-Indian counterparts. These disparities carry over to socioeconomic factors as well. American Indians and Alaska Natives experience higher levels of unemployment, lower median household income, a greater percentage of households in poverty, and lower educational attainment than the all-races population. Herne recommended several strategies to make improving Indian men's health a priority going forward, including improving the quality of and access to health care for these populations. In addition, he suggested identifying and sharing best practices, as well as further research into the identifying the risk and protective factors that affect Native American male health.

Rod K. Robinson, SAMHSA Office of Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse, gave an update on SAMHSA's efforts to reduce substance abuse in Indian communities by coordinating with tribes and federal agencies. Rick Haverkate, Office of Minority Health Resource Center, shared some of the resources available to researchers and programs that service minority populations.

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## **Hamilton Project Hosts Forum on Economic Mobility and Expanding College Opportunity**

The Hamilton Project, an initiative housed at the Brookings Institution, held a forum to discuss the economic imperative of expanding college opportunity. The event was centered around the release of two documents: [Informing Students about Their College Options: A Proposal for Broadening the Expanding College Opportunity Project](#) (policy brief [here](#)), and [Thirteen Economic Facts about Social Mobility and the Role of Education](#).

### **Reaching Low-Income, High-Achieving Students**

The first panel (video available [here](#)), moderated by Hamilton Project Director Michael Greenstone, discussed strategies for reaching low-income high achieving high school students. Caroline Hoxby, Stanford University, shared her proposal for reaching these students, whose annual family income is under \$41,000 and whose grades and test scores place them in the top 4 percent of high school students nationwide. She estimated that 25,000-35,000 U.S. high school seniors meet these criteria each year. However, these students are not applying to the selective colleges and universities for which their high level of achievement qualifies them. College admissions officers at selective institutions report receiving anywhere from eight to fifteen times as many applications from high-income high achievers as low-income high achievers. The real ratio of high-income to low-income high achievers in the population is more like two to one, so, Hoxby explained, it is clear that most of these students are not applying to schools that match their academic abilities.

Hoxby debunked some possible explanations for this problem. Cost is not the issue; students from the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile of family income pay less to attend a highly competitive school than any other tier. And previous research has demonstrated that low-income high-achievers thrive at colleges that match their abilities, so it is not a question of not doing well at these schools. Instead, the problem seems to stem from a lack of information on how to navigate the college application process. To combat this information gap, Hoxby and her colleagues designed an intervention targeted at these students, called the Expanding College Opportunities (ECO) Project.

ECO intervention materials were sent to low-income high-achieving students both through the mail and online and consisted of customized information (based on locality, high school, and family income) about applications, net college costs, and eight no-paperwork application fee waivers. The intervention was tested on roughly 40,000 high achievers in randomized controlled trials and cost \$6 per student. Students who received the intervention were 78 percent more likely to be admitted

to a peer university (a school for which their grades and scores matched those of a typical student there) and 50 percent more likely to enroll in one. Hoxby noted that the ECO intervention is scalable and could be targeted to reach every low-income high-achieving student through the ACT and College Board for the same low cost per student. She also suggested that a similar approach could be taken to target low-income students at other achievement levels and to reach students earlier than their senior year of high school.

William Fitzsimmons, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid at Harvard, discussed the efforts Harvard is making to be more attractive to low-income high-achieving students. Harvard recently overhauled its tuition structure to base it on family income; tuition is free for students whose family income is under \$65,000 and no student is expected to take out loans. Harvard has seen a five percent increase in the number of students receiving Pell grants and a 33 percent increase in the number of students whose family income is under \$80,000. The college doubled the number of advisors, created an events fund for students who cannot afford to attend school events, and started a student organization to help recruit low-income students.

Robert Gordon, Brookings and formerly of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), praised the ECO Project for its large effect size, low cost, and for its use of data to achieve a social purpose. He suggested several challenges that those looking to scale up the intervention should prepare for. First, sequestration and other budgetary pressures will make any new program-however cost effective-a hard sell. Second, increasing concerns over privacy and data use will pose a hurdle; even the perception that data are being used improperly would be a major issue, regardless of the truth. Finally, Gordon noted, "talking about data is boring," so you have to work hard to make sure people don't tune out.

Nicole Farmer Hurd, National College Advising Corps, explained how her organization's work can complement the ECO Project intervention. She pointed out that a recent Georgetown study found that only three percent of students attending the 146 most selective colleges and universities came from the bottom 25 percent of the family income spectrum. The National College Advising Corps recruits recent graduates of selective universities to work in low-income high schools as college advisers. The program has grown from recruiting advisers from one school to working with 18 partner institutions to place over 500 advisers.

### **The Role of Higher Education in Economic Mobility**

David Leonhardt, Washington Bureau Chief for the *New York Times*, moderated a second panel that focused on the role higher education plays in economic and social mobility in the U.S. (video available [here](#)). David Coleman, president of the College Board, which administers the SAT, PSAT, Advanced Placement (AP), and other standardized tests, explained that the College Board wants to hold itself accountable for increasing college opportunity for low-income students. It is experimenting with sending out paperwork-free fee waivers to qualified students and wants to work with partners to find ways to reach more low-income students of all achievement levels. Coleman pointed out that PSAT scores are a good predictor of SAT performance, so that data could be used to reach students earlier in their high school careers.

Jon Whitmore, CEO of ACT, Inc., echoed Coleman's commitment to reach more low-income students, explaining that the ACT is also working on its own college and career readiness programs. He noted that the number of students from low-income households taking the ACT has increased by 20 percent in five years. He expressed a desire to work with the College Board to make sure efforts to help low-income students with the college application process are complementary, not duplicative. Whitmore pointed out that because 15 states require students to take the ACT, they have a rich database that can be used to make efforts to reach low-income students more effective.

Nancy Cantor, outgoing President of Syracuse University and soon to be Chancellor of Rutgers, Newark, explained that there are two approaches to improving college access for low-income students. The first, exemplified by the ECO Project, is "person-based" and involves bringing

individual students to the institution. The second approach, which Syracuse has tried to spearhead in its city, is "place-based," and involves making the community better to increase opportunity for all students. The Say Yes to Education Foundation takes a holistic approach to improving education in Syracuse; it offers legal and health care assistance; before, after, and summer school programs; and teacher development and support. Graduates of the Syracuse school district receive free tuition at one of 100 colleges and universities. Cantor explained that programs like Say Yes to Education hold the entire community accountable for the school district's success, but she emphasized that they should work in tandem with individual-focused efforts like the ECO Project.

William F. Kirwan, Chancellor and CEO of the University System of Maryland, asserted that the United States is facing a crisis of social mobility, and that higher education, though it provides benefits beyond increased earnings (improved quality of life, health, civic engagement, reduced crime rates), is the key to improving economic opportunity. He lamented the fact that the U.S., which prides itself as being the "land of opportunity, falls behind the United Kingdom, known for its rigid class system, in social mobility. He argued that we need affordable interventions, like the ECO Project, but that we also need to address barriers to college access in other ways, like the community-level intervention Cantor described.

## American Evaluation Association Joins COSSA

We are pleased to announce that the American Evaluation Association has joined the Consortium. The American Evaluation Association is an international professional association of evaluators devoted to the application and exploration of program evaluation, personnel evaluation, technology, and many other forms of evaluation. We welcome their participation in COSSA and look forward to working with them on matters of mutual interest.

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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.

UPDATE is published 22 times per year. ISSN 0749-4394.



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