



COSSA

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CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS

Senate Appropriations Subcommittees Set Deadlines for Submitting Testimony

As previously [reported](#), the President's fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget request will not be released until early March, with full details coming out in mid-March. Despite this delay, the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees intend to move forward with their oversight hearings of federal agencies within their jurisdictions. In addition, Senate Appropriations Subcommittees have set deadlines for submission of written testimony for the record. Testimony to the [Senate Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee](#) is due April 25. Testimony to the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Subcommittee is due May 23 (see the link at the bottom of this [page](#) called "Submitting Written Testimony"). House deadlines have not yet been released.

COSSA will be submitting written testimony on behalf of the social and behavioral science community, and we encourage individual COSSA members to do the same to be on record in support of federal science budgets important our research.

COSSA will provide preliminary analysis of the President's FY 2015 budget request in the March 10 issue of Update, with our full analysis to follow in a future edition.

National Science Board Briefs Congress on 2014 Science and Engineering Indicators

As previously reported, the National Science Board (NSB) released their biannual report on science and engineering (S&E) indicators on February 6 (see [Update, February 10, 2014](#)). On February 11, the NSB held a briefing on Capitol Hill to discuss the report and highlight some of its findings. The speakers at the briefing were Dan Arvizu, Chairman of NSB; Ray Bowen, S&E Indicators Chairman for NSB; and Cora Marrett, Acting Director of the National Science Foundation.

The briefing highlighted a number of findings on higher education and research universities. The indicators revealed continuing trends in the shift in higher education spending over the past two decades. Since 1987, state and local appropriations have funded less and less of the costs in public universities while tuition has increasingly accounted for more of the universities' funding. Additionally, tuition has increased substantially more at public universities compared to private, but private universities have also seen increases in tuition. Overall, the tuition burden has shifted away from private and public funders and more towards the students and their families.

Public research universities continue to grant the majority of S&E degrees, and they account for the majority of all research-university enrollment. The indicators also detail a recent trend in the

increase of attendance at community colleges for many S&E graduates; many S&E graduates use community colleges as a starting point for the education and then transfer to a research university.

In a response to an audience question, Bowen said that he hopes policymakers will examine these data when reauthorizing the *Higher Education Act*, which could be considered by Congress this year. He also said that he expects these indicators in future reports to show an increase in the level of state and local appropriations in covering overall tuition once state budgets become healthier. He stressed that if the United States is to remain a world leader in research, it must continue to lead in spending on higher education.

Senate Homeland Security Committee Discusses Preparing for Extreme Weather Events

On February 12, the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs held a hearing on [Extreme Weather Events: The Costs of Not Being Prepared](#). Chairman Tom Carper (D-DE) noted in his opening statement that we have experienced a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of severe weather over the past half century and that "these extreme weather events are costing our country a lot-- not just in lives impacted-- but in economic costs, as well." Acting Ranking Member Ron Johnson (R-WI) questioned whether there are objectively more severe weather events now or if we simply declare weather emergencies more frequently. In either case, he argued, the cost of disaster relief restrains our preparedness and mitigation efforts.

The committee heard from two panels of witnesses. The first was comprised of David Heyman, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Homeland Security (DHS); Caitlin Durkovich, Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection, DHS; and Mark Gaffigan, Managing Director for National Resource and Environment Issues, Government Accountability Office. The second consisted of Collin O'Mara, Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control; Paul Kirshen, University of New Hampshire; and Lindene Patton, Zurich Insurance Group, Ltd.

The panelists all emphasized the importance of investment in mitigation and resilience to better prepare us for extreme weather. O'Mara remarked on the importance of beginning such efforts with sound science and economics to know where vulnerabilities lie. He suggested that Delaware's data-driven approach to building resilience helped it withstand the effects of Superstorm Sandy relatively well. Kirshen shared his research demonstrating that investment in resilience can pay off multiple times over when compared to funding recovery after a disaster hits.

Congressman Rush Holt, Leading Voice on Higher Education and Research, Announces Retirement

Congressman Rush Holt (D-NJ), a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and longtime champion of international educational, research funding, and education funding generally, [announced](#) his retirement this month.

Holt, who holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in physics from New York University, consistently spoke out in defense of the necessity of research funding at the federal level, including securing \$22 billion for research in the stimulus bill. Holt has also co-chaired the House Research and Development Caucus. At a May 2013 [briefing](#) on social science and natural disasters sponsored by COSSA and the Coalition for National Science Funding, Holt spoke on the importance of social science and its inherent link to other scientific fields.



Mikulski Visits NIH

On February 24, Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, paid a visit to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus, which she represents. NIH director Francis Collins welcomed the senator, highlighted her "tireless effort on NIH's behalf" and pointed out that she made good on a promise made to the agency a year ago around its funding. At that time of her first visit, she had just assumed leadership of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Collins pointed out that the senator, together with her counterpart in the House, Representative Hal Rogers (R-KY), led the bipartisan compromise that provided a \$1 billion increase to the NIH's fiscal year FY 2014 budget, as well as supporting the rest of the government for FY 2014.

Calling the NIH the "National Institutes of Hope," Mikulski noted that she made good on her promise to work bicamerally to "cancel the sequester." She recognized that it was a very hard year for the agency, whose budget had been cut by five percent resulting in cuts in funding for competitive grants and the abandonment of possible breakthroughs.

Mikulski praised the work of her colleagues Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) and the resulting budget agreement which eliminated the threat of sequester in FY 2014 and FY 2015. She particularly noted that the budget agreement increased the 302(a) allocation or top line provided to the appropriations committee to spend on discretionary programs. Referencing the \$1 billion increase in the NIH's FY 2014 budget, Mikulski acknowledged that the President "wanted another billion," which is what the agency needs.

She also highlighted the \$41 million provided to the NIH Office of Women's Research. A champion of ORWH, she reflected on the bipartisan effort by herself, the late NIH director Bernadine Healy and the late Senator Ted Kennedy to work across the aisle on behalf of the agency. She stressed the "need to go beyond politics" for the NIH.

She shared with the NIH that "our goal" is no lame duck or shutdown. Pointing out that it was Senator Tom Harkin's (D-IA) last year, she indicated that she would like to bring the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill to the Senate floor. The last time that occurred was in 2007. Looking ahead to 2015, Mikulski indicated that her focus will be on innovation in the life sciences, opportunity, and social justice. She concluded by announcing that she intends to hold an all-subcommittee research and innovation hearing on how to increase support with achievable goals.

NCS Advisory Committee Discusses Study's Framework

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Children's Study Federal Advisory Committee (NCSAC) held its 38th meeting in January. NCSAC provides advice and recommendations regarding critical aspects of the National Children's Study (NCS) to the NCS director, the director of the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the NIH director. The January meeting agenda included a discussion on "Refining the NCS Study Content Framework."

NCSAC chair, Randall Olsen, Ohio State University, noted that the meeting was the first for him where the Committee's attention is "entirely" focused on the science and starts to "get into the real business of the study;" that is, what is asked, collected, and analyzed, and how best to do it.

In his welcoming remarks to the NCSAC, NICHD director Alan Guttmacher pointed out that the NCS was awaiting the report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) which is examining the study (see [Update, July 22, 2013](#)). He highlighted the October 2013 IOM meeting in which NCS participated and reported that it has continued to participate via NCS' response to questions from the IOM Committee. He announced that the report is due in the early summer.

Read on [here](#) for more details from the January meeting.

NIH Council of Councils Meets: Discusses Possible New Common Fund Initiatives, Science Education Partner Awards

On January 31st, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Councils held its first of three advisory meetings for 2014. The agenda included a discussion of NIH use of animals in research, NIH's Science Education Partner Awards, and possible new Common Fund initiatives. Click [here](#) to read COSSA's full report on the meeting.

AHRQ Seeks Public Comment on Cost Reporting in Health

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is seeking scientific information from the public to inform a forthcoming technical brief entitled *Public Reporting on Cost Measures in Health*, under AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program. AHRQ is looking for studies relevant to the brief subject, in particular "studies that report on public reporting of cost measures in health, including those that describe adverse events." Per the Federal Register notice, the brief aims to answer questions that include:

- What measures of costs about health care have been publically reported?
- Are the reported measures consumer-centered?
- What are the consequences of consumers' use of cost data?

Comments must be submitted by March 10, 2014. The full request is available in the [Federal Register](#).

NCHS Releases Summary of 2012 National Health Interview Survey

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has released [Summary Health Statistics for U.S. Adults](#), based on the 2012 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). The report presents estimates for a number of health measures in the U.S. population, including overall health (61 percent of adults report excellent or very good health), heart disease (11 percent), hypertension (24 percent), diabetes (nine percent), and smoking (18 percent current smokers, 21 percent former smokers).

NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

Registration Open for May CNSF Hill Exhibition

As previously [reported](#), the Coalition for National Science Funding's (CNSF) annual Capitol Hill Exhibition and Reception is scheduled for May 7 in the Rayburn House Office Building. COSSA is a member of CNSF, as are several COSSA members. Registration is now open for the event titled, "Investments in STEM Research and Education: Fueling American Innovation." COSSA members who are current on their 2014 CNSF dues are urged to participate in this important event to showcase the value of social and behavioral science funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and to underscore social and behavioral science as a STEM discipline to Members of Congress and staff in attendance. There are a limited number of exhibit booths and slots are expected to fill quickly.

COSSA is a proud co-sponsor of this important annual event and pleased to assist any COSSA members who plan to exhibit. Let's ensure a great showing from the social and behavioral science community.

NRC Workshop Tackles Returning Results of Genomic Research for NCHS

When researchers analyze a genome, they may discover that their subject carries a variant of a

gene that is associated with disease, the effects of which could be prevented or mitigated with proper medical care. Given that most research is generally conducted under the assurance of participants' anonymity, what are the researcher's responsibilities in this situation? What if the genetic sample is part of a de-identified repository? And if the participant has signed a consent form affirming that they will not receive their individual results? Do scientists have an obligation to *look* for potentially important genetic information, even if it does not fall under the purview of their research topic? What about participants' right *not* to know about the findings?

These are questions being confronted by many population-based surveys, including the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). NHANES is a cross-sectional survey that collects detailed information about participants as part of an effort to "take the pulse" of the nation's health. NHANES began collecting and storing genetic specimens in the 1990s, but stopped in 2013 until best practices for notifying participants if disease-associated variants were identified. Prior to this, research utilizing NHANES' genetic data was only approved if there was no chance it could uncover the type of information that would need to be reported to participants. In 2011, an NCHS workshop developed a framework for returning results that met the standard of having direct clinical utility. This plan was presented to NCHS's Board of Scientific Counselors, who recommended that the broader scientific community be given a chance to weigh in before a plan was adopted. In line with this recommendation, the National Research Council's Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) conducted a workshop on February 10 and 11 on [Guidelines for Returning Individual Results from Genomic Research Using Population-Based Banked Specimens](#).

Click [here](#) to read COSSA's full report on the workshop.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NIH: Research on Comparative Effectiveness and Implementation of HIV/AIDS and Alcohol Interventions

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), HIV-positive users remain an underserved group at high risk for medication non-adherence and rapid disease progression, medication toxicities, organ failure, and poor viremic control leading to increased risk of transmission and premature death. The institute is seeking applications designed to advance knowledge of the effective implementation and comparative effectiveness of alcohol-focused interventions among HIV-positive individuals.

NIAAA has reissued a funding opportunity announcement (FOA), *Research on Comparative Effectiveness and Implementation of HIV/AIDS and Alcohol Interventions* ([RFA-AA-14-004](#)). The initiative seeks to advance knowledge of the comparative effectiveness and implementation of alcohol-focused interventions among HIV-positive individuals. The FOA is divided into two parts: (1) testing alternative approaches to the implementation of effective alcohol interventions to reduce HIV disease transmission and progression in a variety of settings; and (2) comparative effectiveness research focused on understanding factors related to alcohol reduction and patient engagement in appropriate alcohol and HIV care leading to long-term treatment.

Applications are due April 21, 2014.

NIH: Empirical Research on Ethical Issues Related to Central IRBs and Consent for Research Using Clinical Records and Data

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) notes that ethical questions and challenges are inherent in the conduct of scientific research and the application of new knowledge and technologies in the clinic. It also highlights the agency's long history of supporting research on ethical issues, and that the support of empirical bioethics research form an integral component of its commitment to

enhance protections for human research subjects, increase the quality of biomedical, clinical, social and behavioral research, and expand the evidence base to inform a sound practice and policy.

Accordingly, the agency has issued a funding opportunity announcement (FOA), *Empirical Research on Ethical Issues Related to Central IRBs and Consent for Research Using Clinical Records and Data* ([RFA-OD-14-002](#)), seeking applications to explore: (1) the principles and characteristics for central Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), and (2) consent and participant preferences for research using clinical records and data.

The agency notes that while central IRBs have been used effectively in some contexts, research and analysis could inform the move to broader use. Additionally, NIH points out that as clinical records are increasingly digitized and interoperable, new opportunities for research involving clinical records and data raise a host of issues including privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and public and patient preferences.

The NIH institutes and centers participating in the FOA include: Cancer; Heart, Lung, and Blood; Human Genome; Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases; Child Health and Human Development; Deafness and Other Communication Disorders; Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; Drug Abuse; General Medical Sciences; National Library of Medicine, and the Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

Applications are due April 18, 2014. More information is available [here](#).

NIJ: Proposals Solicited for Research on Gangs, Children Exposed to Violence, Elder Exploitation and Policing

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has recently released a slate of new solicitations for which it is currently seeking proposals. They include research on [gangs and gang violence](#); research and evaluation on [children exposed to violence](#); research and evaluation on the [abuse, neglect and exploitation of elderly individuals](#); and testing geospatial predictive [policing strategies](#). The deadline for all applications is April 25, 2014. For a full list of NIJ funding opportunities, click [here](#).

NIJ: New Solicitation for Proposals for Comprehensive School Safety Initiative

The National Institute of Justice has announced a solicitation for proposals for the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, which will research the root causes of school violence and develop technologies and strategies for improving school safety. This initiative was funded through *The Department of Justice Appropriations Act* for 2014. The deadline for all applications is May 20, 2014 and the solicitation can be found in its entirety [here](#).

COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES

Acting NIJ Director Addresses ACJS Conference

On January 20, National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Acting Director Greg Ridgeway presented at a session of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) annual conference in Philadelphia. ACJS is a COSSA member and COSSA attended the meeting.

Dr. Ridgeway discussed NIJ's renewed emphasis on science, outlining six ways in which the agency is working to become an "innovation engine" for the justice community:

1. Funding for Science -- NIJ is seeking to apply a greater proportion of its \$261 million annual budget to research, as opposed to technical assistance or training. Roughly \$30-35 million is spent annually by NIJ on social science. In addition, as reported [above](#), NIJ was appropriated \$75 million in the fiscal year (FY) 2014 omnibus bill for a new school safety initiative, dedicated primarily to research.
2. Funding Innovative Ideas -- NIJ is interested in funding the most innovative science. Past practice required projects to include dissemination plans for translating the research into practice, often leaving innovative scientific ideas that did not have strong dissemination components unfunded. Greater emphasis will be placed on the merit of the science versus dissemination plans.
3. New Ways of Funding Research -- NIJ is utilizing "challenges" as a model to fund innovative research, awarding prize money for research teams that address a specific objective. This model attracts non-traditional NIJ researchers.
4. Stimulate Scholarly Output -- For grants issued in FY 2014, researchers will be expected to produce scholarly output, such as publishing results in scientific journals or applying for patents. NIJ is interested in ways to leverage the science it funds beyond the production of final technical reports, which are limited in their utility to practitioners and other researchers. In addition NIJ is encouraging researchers to present findings at practitioner conferences to further assist with dissemination.
5. Promote and Expand Networks -- NIJ is working internally to expand its reach with other federal agencies and researchers, and plans to invite visiting fellows, post-docs, and research assistants to serve at the agency. NIJ has also facilitated the placement of its scientists at other federal agencies and labs, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). NIJ is interested in learning how it can be helpful in expanding networks outside the agency.
6. Organizing NIJ Around Science -- Finally, NIJ is taking steps to reorganize internally to allow scientific staff to focus primarily on research projects, and hiring grant managers to deal with grant and business administration.

In addition to outlining NIJ's efforts, Dr. Ridgeway asked for help from the criminal justice and criminology research community. He asked the audience to be innovative and bring good ideas to the agency. In addition, he encouraged researchers to serve as peer reviewers and serve on panels. Finally, he noted that NIJ's hiring freeze of the last three years has been lifted and they will be seeking visiting fellows and post-docs to serve at the agency; interested researchers and students are encouraged to apply.

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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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