



# COSSA

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## **FEATURED ARTICLE**

### **Social and Behavioral Science in the FY 2015 CJS Appropriations Bill**

On May 8, the House Appropriations Committee approved the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies (CJS) Appropriations bill. The bill provides funding to several agencies and programs important to the social and behavioral sciences.

As previously reported (see [May 5, 2014 Update](#)), the bill was approved by the CJS Subcommittee on April 30 without amendment. In advance of the full committee markup, the Committee released its draft report that accompanies the CJS bill and provides additional information about the Committee's intent. While the funding levels for federal agencies important to the COSSA community remain mostly unchanged following the markup, the accompanying report includes language that would impact the social and behavioral science community.

Check out COSSA's [full analysis](#) for complete details. The bill is expected to see a vote by the full House of Representatives at the end of this month.

## **CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITIES & NEWS**

### **House Roundtable Examines Biomedical Innovation**

On May 6, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held the inaugural event in a series of planned roundtables on its [21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Initiative](#), a collaborative effort designed to accelerate the pace of cures and medical breakthroughs in the U.S. The roundtable initiative is being spearheaded by Committee Chair Fred Upton (R-MI) and Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-CO). The May 6 meeting was the first public discussion of the initiative. Chairman Upton announced that the Committee will spend the next six months holding roundtables in Washington and across the nation along with hearings convened by its Subcommittee on Health. Feedback from experts and interested parties will also be solicited via [white papers](#). DeGette added that the roundtable will examine important but hard questions.

Panel members included National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Francis Collins who stated that from the NIH's perspective, a steady, predictable trajectory of support is needed. The loss of 20 percent of the agency's purchasing power has put the NIH's system under duress, creating a great pall over the next generation who lack the confidence that there is a path for them to participate in research. Collins also emphasized the mismatch of the remarkable scientific opportunity that currently exists and the ability to take advantage of it. Asserting that the federal government is possibly the most important entrepreneur, he emphasized that the situation can be fixed but it will take the Congress to do so. "We are at risk of losing what has been one of America's greatest stories," Collins argued.

As previously reported, the Senate Appropriations Committee held a [hearing](#) on April 29 to examine the impact of federal research investments, which also included testimony from Collins

and other agency leaders.

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## **CDC Director and Other HHS Agency Heads Face Senate Appropriations Panel**

The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education Appropriations Subcommittee [questioned the heads of four agencies](#) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) on May 7. Present were Thomas Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); Mary Wakefield, Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Administration for Children and Families; and Tim Love, Chief Operating Officer of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), sitting in for CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner, who was unavailable.

Each of the Republican Senators present expressed displeasure with the fact that outgoing Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sibelius was not appearing before the committee, although Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) disputed their characterization that she "refused" to appear. He suggested that because appropriations is a forward-looking process and the Secretary will not be in office for the fiscal year in question, it was not necessary for her to appear. Among the topics Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS) said he would have asked Sibelius about was the evaluation tap, a funding mechanism that redistributes money within HHS, including from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to pay for evaluation efforts (conducted by programs at the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation). Moran wanted an explanation for why a proposed increase in the amount of the tap for FY 2015 was necessary.

In his opening statement, Frieden outlined some of the priorities in the CDC's FY 2015 budget request, including combating antimicrobial resistant bacteria, a new global public health security initiative, and addressing a rise in prescription opiate abuse (for more on the CDC's FY 2015 request, see COSSA's [analysis](#) of the administration's full budget request for FY 2015). Harkin expressed concern that the global public health security initiative would replace a CDC program that assists other countries in setting up their own public health institutes.

## **FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES & NEWS**

### **NIH Scientific Management Review Board to Examine Optimizing the Grant-Making Process**

On May 7, Principal Deputy Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Lawrence Tabak outlined the agency's new charge to the Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB), whose purpose is to advise the Department of Health and Human Services and NIH officials on the use of organizational authorities. The NIH is requesting that the SMRB "recommend ways to further optimize the process of reviewing, awarding, and managing grants in a way that maximizes the time researchers can devote to research while still maintaining proper oversight."

Currently, NIH issues more than 1,000 Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) each year and reviews 70,000-80,000 applications. This requires the agency to recruit approximately 22,500 reviewers and run nearly 2,500 meetings. In addressing the charge, Tabak noted that the SMRB should consider: (1) How NIH could streamline the grant-making process and shorten the time

from application to allocation of funds; and (2) How administrative requirements on applicants and their institutions, scientific reviewers, council members, and NIH staff could be reduced while maintaining a high-quality review and management process.

Tabak highlighted some of the challenges as well as the opportunities associated with the peer review process, including the current fiscal climate which means that researchers are facing declining application success rates. The lack of sufficient funding also requires applicants to devote more time and effort to preparing and submitting applications. At the same time, advances in technology may provide an opportunity to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness in the grant-making process. Accordingly, NIH must optimize grant-making in a way that streamlines the process while maintaining accountability and high performance standards. Optimization of the process will allow researchers to spend more time on research. The range of backgrounds and perspectives represented by SMRB members presents the NIH with the opportunity to seek high-level advice regarding the grant making process as a whole, he noted.

Tabak reviewed a number of the other activities that are or have been carried out related to peer review that will be informed by the SMRB's activities. This activity includes the continuous review of peer review established under former NIH director Elias Zerhouni's tenure. The most recent survey of "[Enhancing Peer Review Study Results Report](#)" was just released this month. A second activity surrounds the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) Working Group on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce that made two recommendations that are currently being implemented: (1) Establishment of a working group of the ACD comprised of experts in behavioral and social sciences studies of diversity with a special focus on determining and combating real or perceived biases in the NIH peer review system; and (2) Pilot different forms of validated implicit bias/diversity awareness training for NIH scientific review officers and program officers to determine the most efficacious approaches. Once the best training approaches have been identified with NIH staff, the agency will pilot these programs with members of study sections to ascertain if their value is sustained. If they are, they will be provided to all study section members.

He also pointed out that in January 2013, NIH director Francis Collins convened a team of NIH experts to: (1) "develop methods for identifying emergent, highly active, areas of science as well as those areas that may have stagnated, and (2) recommend approaches for coupling the 'state' of scientific fields with study section organization in order to yield a dynamic system responsive to scientific trends."

A [videocast](#) of the meeting is available. For additional information or to review past reports by the SMRB, visit the SMRB [website](#).

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## **NCHS Releases *Health, United States 2013***

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has released its annual assessment of the health of the nation, [Health, United States, 2013](#), which is submitted to Congress and the President by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The report contains detailed information on birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy, morbidity and health status, risk factors, use of ambulatory and inpatient care, health personnel and facilities, financing of health care, health insurance and managed care, and other health topics. Highlights from the 2013 report include:

- The teen birth rate dropped 31 percent between 2002 and 2012 to a record low.
- Nearly half of adults with hypertension have uncontrolled high blood pressure.
- The percentage of adults who reported not receiving or delaying medical care due to cost

rose from 9.7 percent to 13.3 percent between 2002 and 2012.

- In 2011, there were 26.1 physicians for every 10,000 people in the U.S.

Each year, the report highlights a topic of particular importance to current discussions in public health. The special focus for 2013 is [Prescription Drugs](#). Some of the findings include:

- In 2007-2010, nearly half of adults reported having taken a prescription drug in the past month; one in ten reported taking five or more drugs.
- The most commonly used types of prescription medication were cardiovascular agents and cholesterol-lowering drugs.
- Adults who were uninsured during some or all of the past year were more than four times as likely as steadily-insured adults to report not getting needed prescriptions due to cost concerns.
- Deaths due to opioid analgesic poisoning more than tripled in the past decade.

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## NCHS Board of Scientific Counselors Meets

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) held its biannual meeting on May 12 and 13. Chaired by Raynard Kington, Grinnell College, the BSC is charged with providing advice and making recommendations to NCHS and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) leadership regarding the scientific and technical program goals and objectives, strategies, and priorities of the Center. NCHS Director Charles Rothwell updated the Board on NCHS' activities, and Cynthia Ogden, NCHS, discussed her experience as one of the authors of a paper on obesity trends that received a high level of media scrutiny. Other sessions included a review of the NCHS Office of Analysis and Epidemiology, an update on the National Study of Long-Term Care Providers, and a presentation on using mortality data to conduct public health surveillance. [Read on](#) for COSSA's full report on the meeting.

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## National Climate Assessment Calls for Integration of Social Science to Tackle Climate Challenges

Earlier this month, the [U.S. Global Change Research Program](#) released the third National Climate Assessment, [Climate Change Impacts in the United States](#). The report, which is a product of the National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee and more than 300 experts, provides an assessment of climate changes science and the impacts of climate change on the U.S., both present-day and in the future. The report analyzes climate impacts across seven sectors (human health, water, energy, transportation, agriculture, forests, and ecosystems) as well as across regions of the U.S.

The assessment includes a chapter on "Research Needs for Climate and Global Change Assessments," which identifies a number of "Research Goals" and "Foundational Cross-Cutting Research Capabilities to Support Future Climate Assessments." Among them is a cross-cutting capability to "Integrate national and social sciences, engineering, and other disciplinary approaches." The report suggests that in order to fully realize the potential of climate assessments, additional interdisciplinary research is needed. As the report states, "Understanding of the coupled human-environment system is enriched by combining research from natural and social sciences with research and experiences from the engineering, law, and business professions." The report identifies additional opportunities for interdisciplinary research that utilize social science and understanding of human behavior.



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## USDA Releases 2012 Census of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) has released the [Census of Agriculture](#) for 2012. The Census, which is published every five years, collects data on U.S. farmer demographics, economics, and production practices at the national, state, and local level. The Census finds that 3.2 million farmers operate 2.1 million farms, comprising 914.5 million acres of farmland across the U.S. Retiring NASS Administrator Cynthia Clark [observed](#), "Once every five years, farmers, ranchers and growers have the unique opportunity to let the world know how U.S. agriculture is changing, what is staying the same, what's working and what we can do differently...Today, we can start to delve into the details." Joseph T. Reilly, NASS' Acting Administrator, noted that the information the Census of Agriculture provides is "critical to understanding the conditions of U.S. agriculture and determining future policy."

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## National Commission on Forensic Science Holds Public Meeting

On May 12 and 13, the [National Commission on Forensic Science](#) held its second public meeting to discuss a wide range of issues. This recently formed commission is co-chaired by Deputy Attorney General James Cole and Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology Patrick Gallagher, who is also the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Commission includes representatives with diverse backgrounds, including forensic science service providers, researchers, scientists, representatives from the courts and law enforcement, and other stakeholders. In this meeting, the Commission discussed issues relating to cognitive bias in forensic science, issues around ethics, accreditation scientific inquiry and research, and more generally what the larger purpose of the Commission should be in the future. The Commission indicated that it hopes to form additional subcommittees that will include members from the larger community, including more academics and researchers. They also noted that future solicitations for forensic science related research will be released on its website, which is still under development.

## NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

### AAPSS Holds 2014 Moynihan Lecture with Joseph Stiglitz; Inducts Fellows

On May 8, Nobel Prize Winner and Columbia University professor Joseph Stiglitz delivered a [lecture](#) as the latest winner of the American Academy of Political and Social Science's (AAPSS) Moynihan Prize. The Moynihan Prize, given out each year, "honors individuals who use sound analysis and social science research to inform public policy, while also contributing to the public discourse on society's most pressing issues."

Stiglitz's lecture focused on his work and his most recent book on income inequality and its larger effects on our nation's economy. "High inequality is one of the major contributing factors to the weak economy," Stiglitz said. He noted that inequality is largely a product of policies and, as such, it can be improved through policy. However, with increased economic inequality comes an increase in political inequality due to the role of money in our political system. Without macroeconomic policies leading to full improvement, more support for education, and a slate of other fixes, Stiglitz argued, it is unlikely inequality will improve any time soon.

Stiglitz joins a distinguished [class of fellows](#) who were inducted into the Academy earlier this month in a ceremony in Washington, DC, including Janet Currie, Princeton University and the National Bureau of Economic Research; Greg Duncan, University of California, Irvine; Kathryn Edin, Johns Hopkins School of Arts and Sciences; Alan Gerber, Yale University; Heidi Hartmann, Institute for Women's Policy Research; and Daniel Nagin, Carnegie Mellon University.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

### NIH Center for Scientific Review Announces Two New Competitions

A 2011 National Institutes of Health- (NIH) commissioned study identified gaps in NIH funding success rates for black researchers (see [Update, September 12, 2011](#)). Since the study's release, the NIH has worked to address the issues outlined, including establishing a [Working Group on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce](#) to the Advisory Committee to Director (ACD). The Working Group issued a series of [recommendations](#) and subsequently formed the [Subcommittee on Peer Review](#) to advise the NIH on empirically-based strategies to achieve the goal of detecting potential bias in the NIH peer review process. It is co-chaired by the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) director Richard Nakamura and Joan Y. Reede, Harvard Medical School. Subcommittee members include: Dana Y. Takagi, University of California, Santa Cruz; John F. Dovidio, Yale University; Gordon B. Moskowitz, Lehigh University; Valerie Reyna, Cornell University; Jenessa Shapiro, University of California, Los Angeles; and Oscar Ybarra, University of Michigan.

To this end, CSR recently announced two new competitions designed to solicit the best ideas for aiding NIH's effort to identify and address sources of possible bias in the NIH peer review process. First and second place winners for each competition will receive cash awards.

**Challenge 1: New Methods to Detect Bias in Peer Review**-Individuals are asked to submit their ideas for strategies to detect possible bias in the NIH peer review process. Submissions can include approaches, strategies, methodologies, and/or measures that would be sensitive to detecting bias among reviewers due to gender, race/ethnicity, institutional affiliation, area of science, and amount of research experience. First Place (\$10,000) and Second Place (\$5,000) prizes will be awarded in two categories: best empirically based idea and most creative idea.

**Challenge 2: Strategies to Strengthen Fairness and Impartiality in Peer Review**-Individuals are asked to submit ideas for reviewer training methods aimed at enhancing fairness and impartiality in NIH peer review. The submission does not require full development of training materials. The ideas, however, should be provided in sufficient detail to assess their ability to address fairness and impartiality in review with regards to gender, race/ethnicity, institutional affiliation, area of science, and amount of research experience. First Place (\$10,000) and Second Place (\$5,000) prizes will be awarded for the best overall idea.

The competitions close June 30, 2014. Winners will be announced September 2, 2014. Additional details regarding the rules and submission procedures can be found on the [CSR Challenge website](#) or at [www.challenge.gov](http://www.challenge.gov).

## COSSA MEMBER ACTIVITIES

### Northwestern Discusses Research on Helping Low-Income

# Students Enter, Thrive, and Succeed in College

On May 6, Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research, a COSSA member, sponsored a Congressional briefing in collaboration with Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL). The briefing, Research on How to Help Low-Income Students Enter, Thrive, and Succeed in College, looked at barriers facing underrepresented and low-income groups in higher education and the research-based programs helping them overcome those barriers. The panelists were James Rosenbaum, Northwestern University; Sarah Turner, University of Virginia; and Bridget Terry Long, Harvard University.

Rosenbaum's research focused on a college coaching program based in Chicago, which, among other things, encourages attendance to four-year colleges over two-year institutions. The thought process behind this, which is backed by research, is that two-year institutions have much lower completion rates and provide less support to the students once they enter. The coaching program, by providing counseling in a wide range of areas including financing higher education, has shown increased enrollment in four-year institutions and is changing the perception among many populations that college is in fact realistic and affordable.

Turner sought to examine the relatively new Expanding College Opportunities Project (ECOP), which focuses on high-achieving, low-income students. While high-income students apply at high rates to selective institutions, low-income students with similar rates of achievement apply at much lower numbers to the same selective institutions. ECOP provides information and counseling to these high-achieving, low-income students through counseling and has shown significant increases in applications to selective institutions and higher admittance rates.

Finally, Long's presentation examined the "college decision pipeline," a concept that describes the often complex process of financing, choosing, and applying to colleges. To many families, this is an incredibly daunting process with complex applications, loan information, and lack of support from counselors. Long's research has shown that providing timely, sensitive information in these areas and others improves student outcomes in higher education. When it comes to paying for college, many families do not save nearly enough for a number of reasons: lack of funds, lack of knowledge, or complexity of college savings plans. Long detailed focus group research that has shown when families are walked through the process of opening up a college savings plan the amount saved increases drastically.

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Southern Sociological Society  
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### Centers and Institutes

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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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