



WASHINGTON UPDATE

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FEATURED NEWS

Anti-Science COMPETES Bill Heads to House Floor

On April 23, the House Science, Space and Technology Committee [passed](#) along party lines (19 Republicans to 16 Democrats) the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015* (H.R. 1806). According to Committee Chairman and sponsor of the legislation Lamar Smith (R-TX), H.R. 1806 is a "pro-science and fiscally responsible bill." It prioritizes basic research at the National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Science, and National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), while keeping funding levels within Congressionally-set discretionary spending limits. For NSF, the bill would increase funding for the Biological Sciences (BIO), Engineering (ENG), Mathematical and Physical Sciences (MPS), and Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) directorates at the expense of other NSF accounts, including Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) and Geosciences (GEO). See COSSA's [analysis](#) of H.R. 1806 for more information. COSSA strongly opposes H.R. 1806 and issued a [statement](#) expressing our concerns.

[Read on](#) for more on the markup.

COSSA IN ACTION

COSSA and Partners Advocate for Social Science Funding and Sound Scientific Policies

COSSA has joined with its partner organizations and coalitions on several letters to Congress urging increased funding for social and behavioral science programs and sound scientific policies. Recent letters addressing fiscal year (FY) 2016 funding and scientific conference travel can be viewed [here](#).

CONGRESSIONAL NEWS

NIH Appears Before Senate Appropriations Subcommittee

On April 30, National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Francis Collins made his annual appearance before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) to discuss the President's proposed FY 2016 budget request for the agency. The NIH director was accompanied by several institute directors: **Anthony Fauci**, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), **Douglas Lowy**, National Cancer Institute (NCI), **Gary Gibbons**, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), **Jon Lorsch**, National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), and **Tom Insel**, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

[Read on](#) for more details.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Releases Second Version of *21st Century Cures* Draft

On April 29, the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations released the second iteration of the Committee's [21st Century Cures bill](#) (see Update, [February 24, 2015](#)). The latest draft is a collaborative effort by Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI), Ranking Member Diana DeGette (D-CO), Energy and Commerce full committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ), Health Subcommittee Chairman Joe Pitts (R-PA), and Health Subcommittee Ranking Member Gene Green (D-TX).

The new version of the discussion draft would authorize the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for three years (FY 2016 through FY 2018), and increase its funding level by \$1.5 billion each year. It also creates an NIH Innovation Fund for FY 2016 through FY 2020, financed by a mandatory appropriation of \$2 billion a year. The Innovation Fund would be used to support precision medicine, young emerging investigators, and other priorities yet to be identified.

The section-by-section summary of the discussion draft is available online [here](#). A one-page summary is available online [here](#).

FEDERAL AGENCY & ADMINISTRATION NEWS

ACS to Retain Marriage, Field of Degree Questions Proposed for Elimination

The Census Bureau will [retain several questions](#) in the American Community Survey (ACS) originally identified for removal: Person Question No. 12, undergraduate field of degree, and Person Question Nos. 21-23, which are related to marital history. The questions were proposed for elimination as part of the Bureau's 2014 Content Review of the ACS and were released to the public for comment in the fall (see [Update, November 3, 2014](#)). COSSA objected to the removal of these questions in a [written comment](#), as did many other organizations in the scientific community.

[Read on](#) for more details.

White House Seeks Input on Using Science and Technology to Improve the Lives of Older Americans

In preparation for the 2015 White House Conference on Aging, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the Domestic Policy Council are seeking input on science and technology initiatives that can improve the quality of life for older Americans. Examples of such activities might include:

- Expanded university and industry research and development to address challenges associated with aging
- Educational programs that help designers create "person-centered" products and services for older Americans
- Efforts to promote an "innovation ecosystem" for older Americans, which might involve accelerators, incubators, well-designed incentive prizes, and mechanisms for researchers and entrepreneurs to get rapid feedback on their proposed solutions
- The identification of one or more Grand Challenges around aging - ambitious but achievable goals that would significantly improve the health, independence, and quality of life for older Americans.

More information about the request for input is available [here](#). Responses can be submitted through [this form](#) by May 22.

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable Named Director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities



On April 28, National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Francis S. Collins announced the selection of Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, M.D. as Director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities ([NIMHD](#)). He is expected to join NIH in September.

Currently at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), Pérez-Stable is a professor of medicine, chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine, and director of the Center for Aging in Diverse Communities. He is also director of the UCSF Medical Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse Populations, which is addressing issues for African Americans, Asians, and Latinos in the areas of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and reproductive health. His personal research interest is in improving the health of poor and minority patients, reducing health risks such as smoking in minority populations, and improving cross-cultural communication skills among health care

professionals.

Announcing Pérez-Stable's appointment, Collins noted that "Eliseo is a highly respected leader with rich experience in advancing efforts to eliminate health disparities. He has the passion and vision to guide the NIMHD research agenda in this critically important area."

Collins also recognized and thanked Acting NIMHD Director Yvonne T. Maddox for her "exemplary and dedicated service of leading the NIMHD efforts over the last year." He also announced that Maddox is moving on to become Vice President for Research at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

NIH: NIMHD Seeking Input for Health Disparities Science Vision

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) serves as the focal point for the agency's conduct of research, research training, capacity-building, and outreach dissemination of minority health and health disparities. NIMHD recently initiated a scientific planning process in collaboration with the NIH institutes and centers designed to define a vision that will guide the development of "the science of health disparities research for the next decade and identify key research areas that should be given high priority because knowledge in those areas might inform translational efforts that could have a significant impact on reducing health disparities."

To that end, NIMHD has issued a time-sensitive request for information (RFI), *Soliciting Input into the NIH Science Vision for Health Disparities Research* ([NOT-MD-15-006](#)). The Institute is seeking conceptual input regarding the science vision for health disparities research. Comments are being specifically sought regarding key research areas that might address the complexity of the multiple, interacting factors that often generate and perpetuate health disparities.

[Read on](#) for more details.

NIH: Input Sought on Precision Medicine Cohort

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is seeking feedback from the scientific community via a *Request for Information (RFI): NIH Precision Medicine Cohort* ([NOT-OD-15-096](#)) to guide it in creating a longitudinal cohort of one million or more Americans who have volunteered to participate in research as part of the President's proposed Precision Medicine Initiative (PMI) (see [Update, April 21, 2015](#)).

Specifically, the agency is seeking information on characteristics, purpose, or other overall aspects in the development and implementation of a large U.S. precision medicine cohort. As participants in PMI, individuals will be asked to give consent for extensive characterization of biologic specimens and behavioral and environmental data, all linked to their electronic health records (EHRs). Qualified researchers will have access to the cohort's de-identified data for research and analysis.

[Read on](#) for more details.

COSSA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

APA Briefing Explains the Psychology behind False Confessions

The American Psychological Association (APA), a COSSA governing member, held a Congressional briefing on April 29, in conjunction with the Coalition for National Science Funding (CNSF) Exhibition. The briefing featured Saul Kassin, Distinguished Professor of Psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (also a COSSA member), who spoke about his research on false confessions. Kassin observed that it is often difficult for people to understand why someone would admit to a crime they did not commit. However, in his analysis of a database of convictions overturned by DNA evidence, Kassin found that more than a quarter of the wrongly convicted individuals had made a confession.

Kassin's talk was divided into two sections: "Why innocent people confess" and "Why confessions trump innocence." In the first section, he described some of the harrowing experiences of individuals who had been wrongly convicted after confessing and explained some of the factors that put suspects at risk of making a false confession. These include vulnerability of the suspect, interrogation tactics like lying about evidence or prolonging the interview, and suspects' belief that the fact their innocence will absolve them of charges, regardless of what they do or say during the police interrogation. In the second section of his talk, Kassin noted that for most people, a confession means that a person is guilty. However, few people can differentiate a false confession from a real one, and juries are overwhelmingly swayed by confessions—even in cases where they are told to disregard it. Furthermore, innocent people who have confessed are more likely to take a guilty plea than those who have not, because they know how strongly their confession will count against them in the courtroom.

EVENTS CALENDAR

[National Science Board Meeting](#), Arlington, VA, May 5-6, 2015

[2015 Daniel Patrick Moynihan Lecture](#), Washington, DC, May 7, 2015

[American Association for Public Opinion Research Annual Conference](#), Hollywood, FL, May 14-17, 2015

[NSF Education and Human Resources Advisory Committee Meeting](#), Arlington, VA, May 19-20, 2015

[Law and Society Association Annual Meeting](#), Seattle, WA, May 28-31, 2015

[OBSSR 20th Anniversary Celebration](#), Bethesda, MD, June 23-25, 2015

[OBSSR Capitol Hill Exhibition & Reception](#), Washington, DC, June 24, 2015

[American Psychological Association Annual Convention](#), Toronto, Canada, August 6-9, 2015

[Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting](#), Madison, WI, August 6-9, 2015

[American Statistical Association Joint Statistical Meetings](#), Seattle, WA, August 8-13, 2015

[American Sociological Association Annual Meeting](#), Chicago, IL, August 22-25, 2015

A list of COSSA members' annual meetings and other events can be found on the COSSA [website](#). COSSA members who have an upcoming event they would like to see listed in the Events Calendar and on our website should send an email to jmilton@cozza.org.

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The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to promote sustainable federal funding for social and behavioral science research and federal policies that positively impact the conduct of research.

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