

Public Affairs Update July 2006

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 appropriations process is proceeding, but it's becoming increasingly unlikely Congress will pass all of the funding bills before adjourning for the November mid-year elections. A post-election, or "lame duck," session after the elections is almost assured.

Fiscal Year 2007 Appropriations

National Institutes of Health and National Center for Health Statistics

Before adjourning in July for a brief recess, the U.S. House of Representatives passed 10 of its 11 annual appropriations bills—falling one bill short of the goal House Appropriations Chairman Jerry Lewis (R-CA) set earlier this year of completing all bills by July 4. The House was unable to bring H.R. 5647, the FY 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education appropriations bill to the floor due to a provision inserted by a vote of the House Appropriations Committee to raise the minimum hourly wage by \$2.10. At press time, it was not clear when the House would consider the Labor, HHS bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to consider its version of the Fiscal Year 2007 Labor, HHS bill on July 20. The Labor, HHS bill is very important to the Population Association of America (PAA) since it funds the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Unfortunately, the House did not recommend increasing funding for either the NIH or NCHS in Fiscal Year 2007 above the Administration's request.

The PAA, and its affiliate organization, the Association of Population Centers (APC), are pleased the House Appropriations Committee, in a report accompanying the FY 2007 Labor, HHS appropriations bill, included language praising demographic research programs at the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Specifically, the Committee commended NIA for supporting "exceptional" demographic and economic research on the implications of population aging and praised its efforts to proactively review its data collection activities. The Committee also congratulated NICHD for supporting an "impressive" demographic research portfolio and encouraged the Institute to support demographic research training programs and large-scale databases, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

In another NIH-related issue, the Committee included bill language, instructing NICHD to dedicate \$69 million from within funds provided to continue the National Children's Study (NCS). Concerned about the effect this directive could have on the Institute's ability to fund other initiatives and research activities in FY 2007, PAA and APC, along with approximately 30 other organizations, sent a letter to the members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, thanking them for recognizing the importance of the NCS. However, the letter also asks the House and Senate to provide new funding to NICHD, and other federal agencies involved in the study, in support of NCS in FY 2007.

With respect to NCHS, the House Appropriations Committee praises the agency for fulfilling its mission as the nation's premiere health statistics agency and for ensuring the credibility and integrity of its data it produces. The Committee also asks the agency to continue making information accessible to the public as soon as possible.

National Science Foundation

Two other federal agencies important to the PAA and APC, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Census Bureau, are funded by H.R 5672, the Fiscal Year 2007 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill.

On June 29, the full House of Representatives completed action on its version of the bill. The House included \$6.02 billion for NSF, the same as the Administration requested, which would fully fund the proposed American Competitiveness Initiative. On July 13, the Senate Appropriations Committee endorsed the subcommittee's recommendation to fund NSF \$410 million over the FY 2006 budget, which \$29 million short of the House FY 2007 NSF budget. At press time, it was not clear when the full Senate would consider its version of the Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill.

Census Bureau

PAA and APC are most concerned about funding levels the House and Senate Appropriations Committees have proposed for the Census Bureau. Although the House Appropriations Committee initially provided \$874 million for the Bureau, only \$4 million short of the Administration's request, the amount was reduced to \$815.7 million when the House passed several amendments during floor debate. These amendments reduced funding for the Bureau in order to support a variety of law enforcement programs covered by the bill.

Following House action, the Census Bureau issued an "impact statement," saying the proposed funding reduction would force it to abandon plans to use GPS-equipped hand-held computers to collect information from unresponsive households in the census. Funding at the House-passed level also would result in cancellation of group quarters coverage in the American Community Survey (ACS) and "compromise" new initiatives to reduce undercounts and overcounts in the 2010 census.

To communicate concern about the House mark, PAA and APC, as members of a diverse group of census stakeholders, under the umbrella of The Census Project, sent a letter to members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, urging support for full funding for the Census Bureau. The letter was signed by 25 organizations representing local governments, scientific professions and researchers, the business community, housing and social justice advocates, and organized labor. The letter is posted at www.thecensusproject.org.

On July 13, the Senate Appropriations Committee, however, approved roughly \$828 million for the Census Bureau, about \$50 million less than the President's request of \$878 million. The funding reduction will affect programs in the Bureau's Periodic Censuses and Programs account, not the Salaries and Expenses account. PAA and APC

will work with other organizations to try to improve the funding outlook for the Bureau as the FY 2007 appropriations process continues.

In a census-related issue, the House Appropriations Committee passed, and the full House approved, a proposal by Congressman Jose Serrano (D-NY) to allocate \$29.2 million for the Census Bureau to continue fielding the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) while the agency designs an alternative program to produce data on the dynamics of economic well-being. The Bush Administration has proposed eliminating SIPP next year, saying the current design is burdensome for respondents and that data processing is time-consuming and difficult. The President requested \$9.2 million to close out data collection in 2006 and begin developing a replacement program.

Until this issue is resolved in the final Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bill, the Bureau will proceed with its initial plans to develop an alternative to SIPP. On June 8, PAA, and other stakeholder organizations, participated in a meeting sponsored by the Brookings Institution, to discuss which data elements from SIPP should be retained in the replacement survey. Dr. Jeffery Passel, Chairman, Committee on Population Statistics, represented PAA at this meeting and will keep the PAA/APC leadership apprised of future developments.

USAID Child and Maternal Health Programs

On June 9, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 5522, its version of the FY 2007 Foreign Operations appropriations bill. The bill included \$350 million for Family Planning/Reproductive Health (FP/RH) programs funded by USAID. On June 29, the Senate considered its version of the bill, providing \$465 million. The amount is more than the House because the Senate proposes consolidating funding for FP/RH programs from all bilateral accounts. It is not clear when the full Senate will consider its version of this appropriations bill.