

Public Affairs Update November 2006

Status of Appropriations

On September 29, the Senate passed H.R. 5631, the Fiscal Year 2007 Defense Appropriations bill, which the President signed into law the same day. The bill included language funding most federal agencies at the Fiscal Year 2006 levels through November 17. Congressional leaders have agreed to take up most other appropriations bills during a lame-duck session after the November 7 elections. The pundits predict the most likely outcome is an omnibus appropriations bill that will encompass all remaining appropriations bills. The below table summarizes the House and Senate recommended levels of funding for agencies important to the Population Association of America (PAA). Select members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee will negotiate final funding levels during the upcoming lame duck session.

FY 2007 Appropriations

| Agency / Institute | (\$Millions) | |
|--|--------------|--------|
| | House | Senate |
| National Institutes of Health | \$28.3 | \$28.5 |
| National Institute on Aging | \$1.03 | \$1.04 |
| National Institute of Child Health and Human Development | \$1.25 | \$1.26 |
| National Center for Health Statistics | \$109 | \$109 |
| National Science Foundation | \$6.02 | \$5.99 |
| Census Bureau | \$815 | \$828 |
| USAID Child Survival/Maternal Health | \$350 | \$465 |

Fiscal Year 2007 Appropriations: Highlights

National Institutes of Health

On June 20, 2006, the House Appropriations Committee completed its mark-up of the FY 2007 Labor, HHS appropriations bill. The Committee recommended funding NIH at \$28.3 billion, slightly above last year's level and equal to the President's budget request. In the Senate committee action, NIH received \$220.8 million above the FY 2006 appropriation and \$220.7 million over the President's request.

In reports accompanying both the House and Senate Fiscal Year 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bills, the Appropriations Committees 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 Committees 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 Committees 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.

As part of the final Fiscal Year 2007 spending bill, Congress will need to decide the future of the National Children's Study (NCS). Although the Administration has recommended canceling the study in FY 2007, the House of Representatives has instructed NICHD to dedicate \$69 million from within funds provided to continue the NCS. The Senate Appropriations Committee, however, has recommended funding for the NCS should come from the office of the NIH Director. While action on the fiscal year 2007 appropriation is in process, Study planners will continue to work toward completion of the protocol, and will work with the Vanguard Centers to establish infrastructure to support the Study, such as developing the information management system and ethics guidelines, and plans for recruitment and retention.

National Center for Health Statistics

In the House and Senate Labor, HHS appropriations bill reports, the Committees praised the National Center for Health Statistics 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 asked the agency to continue making information accessible to the public as soon as possible. Both chambers recommended funding NCHS at the president's FY 2007 request.

Census Bureau

As members of the Census Project, PAA continues to express its support for funding the Census Bureau at the highest possible level in Fiscal Year 2007. The levels of funding recommended by the House and Senate are lower than the Administration's request, and as a result, threaten the agency's future plans to use GPS-equipped hand-held computers, to include group quarters in the American Community Survey, and to implement new initiatives to reduce undercounts and overcounts in the 2010 census. On October 16, the PAA joined other Census Project members and signed onto a letter asking members of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to increase funding for the Bureau in the final FY 2007 appropriations bill. This letter is posted at: www.thecensusproject.org.

National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006

On September 26, the House of Representatives passed HR 6164, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Reform Act of 2006, under suspension of the rules--an expedited procedure for non-controversial measures. Several large organizations, including the American Association of Medical Colleges, American Heart Association, and Association of American Universities, supported its passage.

The bill authorizes funding for the NIH for a three-year period and recommends increasing the funding level by 5% every year beginning in Fiscal Year 2007. The bill creates a new, comprehensive electronic reporting system that will catalogue all of the research activities of the NIH in a standardized format. The bill also eliminates a number of reports and creates a new biennial report to Congress on NIH research activities, advances, and future plans. In a report accompanying the bill, the House Energy and

Commerce Committee included language requiring the NIH Director to report on population research activities and advances as part of the new biennial report.

With respect to research, the bill establishes a “common fund,” which will grow to 5% of the total NIH budget, to provide a permanent funding mechanism for trans-NIH research projects. Until the fund reaches 5%, half of any new money appropriated to the NIH will go into the common fund. Trans-NIH research projects will be identified through the new Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives and approved by a new advisory body, the Council of Councils. The Division would replace the newly created Office of Portfolio Analysis and Strategic Initiatives.

Rather than creating or eliminating Institutes or Centers (ICs), the bill maintains the current number of ICs while establishing a process for reviewing the structure of the agency every seven years. The process will allow for public input and medical research and patient organizations will be represented on the Scientific Management Review Board, which will be responsible for conducting the periodic reviews.

During the upcoming lame duck session, the Senate may consider HR 6164—especially if the Republicans maintain control of Congress after the elections. However, thus far, the Senate has not expressed an interest in considering the NIH Reform Act. There is still a chance, however, the bill could become law.