

Washington Insider

CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

The 114th Congress concluded in December, passing a continuing resolution that will keep funding for agencies in a holding pattern until April 28 and shift the responsibility for a FY 2017 budget to the new Congress. HR 2028, passed on December 9, 2016, extended a previous continuing resolution that maintained FY 2016 funding levels beyond the end of the fiscal year. Funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Endowment for the Humanities, Title IV, and Fulbright-Hays for the remainder of FY 2017 will be set by the 115th Congress. At the time of writing, it is unclear whether the new Congress will extend current funding levels through FY 2017 and turn their focus instead to FY 2018, or seek to make significant budgetary changes for the final months of FY 2017.

Although the appropriations bills were not approved by the 114th Congress, much of the proposed legislation included positive signs for the social science community. The House and Senate committees included roughly steady levels of funding for NSF research in their proposals. The House bill decreased NSF funding by \$57 million overall, but increased the NSF's Research and Related Activities account by \$46 million above FY 2016 as enacted. The report for the House bill also included language in support of research "across all scientific disciplines," and did not include specific funding levels or cuts for specific directorates. A press release accompanying the passage of the Senate appropriations bill also emphasized the funding of "all scientific disciplines."

The 114th Congress also passed the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (S 3084) just under the wire. The compromise bill, unlike previous versions introduced in the 114th Congress in the Senate and House, does not authorize appropriations for the National Science Foundation. The legislation reaffirms the NSF's merit-based review process, instructs the NSF to award grants to increase participation of women and minority groups in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and requires the NSF to increase oversight of large-scale research projects over their full life cycle. The House of Representatives approved the legislation in a rare pro-forma session under suspension of the rules on December 16, after many Representatives had already left town. President Barack Obama signed S 3084 into law on January 6, 2017.

In 2016, APSA worked with coalition groups to combat proposals that threatened authorizations levels for the NSF's

Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) and funding for Fulbright-Hays. APSA pushed back against provisions in the America COMPETES Act that passed the House in May 2015 that would have set directorate-specific funding levels at the NSF. The legislation allocated the SBE directorate \$150 million, 45 percent below funding levels at the time. The Senate Appropriations Committee also passed a bill in June 2016 that would have slashed Fulbright-Hays funding by 69% from FY 2016 levels. APSA will continue to monitor legislative developments and stand firmly against any similar legislation in the new Congress.

APSA ACTIVITIES

Throughout 2016 and into 2017, APSA continued to advocate for the profession in collaboration with the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), the National Humanities Alliance (NHA), the Coalition for the National Science Foundation (CNSF), and the Coalition for International Education. APSA regularly meets with policymakers to inform them about the value of political science research and our critical role in teaching civics and developing an informed democratic citizenry. We continue to emphasize the importance of fact-based research and important theoretical insights of political scientists around the world. APSA informs members about legislative developments and issues advocacy alerts through the APSA website and social media platforms. We offer and continue to develop resources to support political scientists in grassroots activities and encourage member participation in advocacy days sponsored by the NEH and COSSA.

UPCOMING DEVELOPMENTS

Following the 2016 election and up until this time of writing, the Trump administration has not issued any policy statements or made clear its approach to the federal funding of scientific research. However, in January 2017, *The Hill* reported that the new administration's budget blueprint included a plan to defund the National Endowment for Humanities, among other significant budget cuts. At the time of writing, APSA is joining the NHA's efforts to educate Congress about the necessity of NEH funding and taking part in other activities to inform policy makers about the critical importance of the discipline. ■