

Senate Supports Behavioral Science in 2011

November 01, 2010

Although the US mid-term election results are getting most of the attention in Washington and elsewhere, APS remains focused on the day-to-day business of Congress and federal funding agencies. Every year, Congressional appropriations committees decide the budgets for federal research agencies, including the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), a \$30-billion agency that reportedly supports \$3.5 billion in behavioral science research.¹ As part of the process, the committees issue detailed companion reports expressing Congressional priorities and the intent behind the numbers in the agency budgets.

APS has a long and successful tradition of working with both chambers of Congress to advocate for behavioral science research, and these efforts often are reflected in the appropriations reports (www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/advocacy/congressional_activities).

Most of NIH's 27 Institutes and Centers fund some level of behavioral science (both basic and mission-oriented), but several of the Institutes count behavioral science as a large and important component of their portfolios, and these are the ones that Congress typically focuses on (however, Congress does chastise Institutes not funding enough behavioral science, such as the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), long the focus of appropriations language; see the November 2009 *Observer* for more details, www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer).

The US Senate has issued its report for the NIH budget for fiscal year (FY) 2011. Following are some of the notable items from the report; excerpts from the Senate report are also provided below.

Behavioral Research in Tobacco

The Senate sees a central role for behavioral science research in controlling tobacco use, particularly in adolescents, and further encouraged the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to help bring behavioral science to bear on the Food and Drug Administration's effort in regulating tobacco (NCI sponsored a symposium on this topic at the 2010 convention: www.psychologicalscience.org/convention).

APS worked with Congress to highlight this research. NCI has been at the forefront of the behavioral science enterprise within NIH in recognizing the value of both basic and applied psychological science, funding a wide range of areas, from social psychology to psychoneuroimmunology. Read more about NCI's behavioral science programs at www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications. NCI will be at the 2011 APS convention, which will be in Washington, DC, along with many other federal agencies.

Emerging Areas of Behavioral Science: The Senate encouraged several Institutes, including the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), to invest in emerging interdisciplinary areas of behavioral science, such as behavioral neuroscience and behavioral genetics.

The Senate also took note of behavioral economics research supported by the National Institute on Aging (NIA). patting NIA on the back for recognizing the importance of this area of research, for everything from improving older Americans' financial decision-making to how to get people to adopt a more positive outlook, with the goal of improving overall health. The Senate has asked NIA to do additional work on this topic; toward that end, APS is working with the Behavioral & Social Science Research division to support the exciting theme program on behavioral economics at the 2011 APS convention (www.psychologicalscience.org/convention).

From Basic to Clinical

The Senate commended NIH's catch-all basic science institute, NIGMS, for its significant leadership role in NIH Basic Behavioral and Social Science Opportunity Network (OppNet). At the same time, the committee was very clear that it expects NIGMS and NIH generally to do more to create and maintain a stable program of support for basic behavioral science research.

On the other end of the spectrum, this year, a new item has captured Congress' attention: the recognition of science-based psychology training program accreditation. Congress is specifically encouraging the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), as well as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, to support this new system (more on the accreditation system below).

HRSA funds health professional training programs, including clinical psychology doctoral programs. In its FY 2011 appropriations report, the Senate "encourages HRSA to focus on supporting programs with demonstrated scientifically-based potential," and further, that "these programs should include academic institutions with a demonstrated commitment for improving health outcomes, as documented by science-based accreditation processes."

This language helps pave the way for HRSA to support the new psychological clinical accreditation system (PCSAS; <http://pcsas.org/>) that the Academy of Psychological Clinical Science has been developing over the last few years, with APS support (see March 2009 *Observer* stories on clinical science and accreditation, PCAS outreach, and the February 2010 story on the new accreditation system; see also the 2010 APS convention panel:

<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2010/july-august-10/is-clinical-psychology-broken.html>). PCSAS programs provide science-centered education and training to increase the quality and quantity of clinical scientists contributing to public health, and to enhance scientific understanding of mental and behavioral health care.