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**Policy News from NSC Alliance**

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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**Survey of States Finds Continuing Budget Concerns**

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) recently released the 2010 Fiscal Survey of the States. As described in the report, the survey “presents aggregate and individual data on the states’ general fund receipts, expenditures, and balances. Although not the totality of state spending, these funds are used to finance most broad-based state services and are the most important elements in determining the fiscal health of the states.”

As reported in the Executive Summary, “after two of the most challenging years for state budgets, fiscal 2011 will present a slight improvement over fiscal 2010. However, even an improvement over one of the worst time periods in state fiscal conditions since the Great Depression states still forecast considerable fiscal stress...in fiscal 2012 a significant amount of stat funding made available by the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will no longer be available. The significant wind down of this support will result in a continuation of extremely tight fiscal conditions for states and could lead to further state spending cuts.”

Furthermore, state general fund receipts typically lag behind national economic recoveries. So, even though the national recession was declared over, the nation's economic recovery has also been slow to develop. These factors, the report notes, suggest that state revenue will remain well below pre-2008 recession levels.

Indeed, the report notes that "State general fund expenditures have been so negatively affected by this recession that both fiscal 2009 and fiscal 2010 saw nominal declines in state spending. These back to back declines, only the second and third time that state general fund spending has declined in the history of this report, also marks the first time in which states have had consecutive years of lower general fund spending."

Even in this environment, there are some signs of improvement in fiscal 2011.

The survey found that:

- 35 states enacted budgets with higher general fund spending compared to fiscal 2010;
- 36 states still forecast lower general fund spending in fiscal 2011 compared to fiscal 2008;
- Fiscal 2010 general fund expenditures were \$612.6 billion compared to \$660.9 billion in fiscal 2009, a 7.3 percent decline;
- Fiscal 2011 state enacted budgets call for \$645.1 billion in general fund spending, a 5.3 percent increase. In comparison to fiscal 2011; and,
- General fund spending in fiscal 2008 was \$687.3 billion which was \$74.7 billion greater than spending in fiscal 2010 and \$42.2 billion greater than general fund expenditures in fiscal 2011

Not surprisingly, reduced general fund spending was the result of "significant declines in sales, personal income, and corporate income tax collections." Collectively, revenue from these taxes constitutes nearly 80 percent of general fund revenue. Moreover, "total general fund tax revenues in 2010 were \$609.7 billion compared to \$680.2 billion in fiscal 2008, a decline of 10.4 percent."

The prolonged national recession and slow recovery have placed significant pressures on state budgets as individual have increasingly sought state funded services, such as Medicaid. Increased demand for services has forced states to close nearly \$230 billion in budget gaps between fiscal year 2009 and 2011. Yet, as reflected in the Fiscal Survey of the States, pressures remain. Nearly 11 states continue to report budget deficits of roughly \$10 billion. As states are required to have balanced budgets, these shortfalls must be addressed by the end of each states fiscal year 2011.

Looking forward, the survey found that "thus far 23 states are reporting \$40.5 billion in budget gaps for fiscal 2012 and 17 states are reporting \$40.9 billion in budget gaps for fiscal 2013. In order to help close state budget gaps, 39 states made \$18.3 billion in mid-year budget cuts to their fiscal 2010 budgets while 14 states have already made \$4.0 billion in cuts to their fiscal 2011 enacted budget. The dramatic speed at which general fund revenue declined is also highlighted by the 42 states which made mid-year budget cuts of \$41.6 billion in fiscal 2009."

In addition to new taxes and fees, which several states have implemented, a number of states have tapped reserved that were built prior to the recession. Finally, states utilized nearly \$151 billion in flexible emergency funding that was provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. These funds have now expired, removing one source of revenue that has been available to states for addressing pressing budget issues.

The complete report is available at <http://nscalliance.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/fiscal-survey-of-states-2010.pdf>.

## **Congress Reauthorizes America COMPETES Act**

The United States Senate has unanimously passed legislation to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act. The measure represents a compromise between the two chambers of Congress. Although the House of Representatives passed the legislation last May, the bill stalled in the Senate due to concerns raised by some Republicans over the cost of the plan. A reduction in funding authorizations and other changes paved the way for final passage. The Senate version of the bill was subsequently passed by the House and is expected to be signed into law by the President.

HR 5116, as passed by the Senate, would authorize funding for three years for research and education programs at the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Department of Energy Office of Science. It would also reinforce the roles of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

One of the key changes Senate Republicans succeeding in making to the original bill was to reduce its cost by reducing authorizations. For instance in fiscal year 2013, the Senate recommended \$8.3 billion for NSF versus the \$8.76 billion recommended by the House. Additionally, the House had sought to authorize funding levels for five years, but the Senate would only commit to a three year authorization.

Notably for the natural science collections community, the Senate bill includes language regarding the management, use, and access to federal scientific collections. HR 5116 would require the Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a policy to improve access to, and preservation of, federally held scientific collections. Significantly, the Senate bill would require that the plan be developed in consultation with non-federal collections.

## **House Selects Committee Leadership**

Republicans and Democrats in the United States House of Representatives have now selected their Committee chairmen and ranking members, respectively, for the 112th Congress. The following provides a brief introduction to some of the new leaders of the House of

Representatives. Additional details about subcommittee leadership will appear in a future AIBS Public Policy Report.

Two Republicans will run the House Science and Technology Committee next year. Representative Ralph Hall (R-TX) was selected to chair the committee; Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI) will serve as the committee's vice chair. Hall has served as the ranking member of the committee for the past four years. One of his primary interests in science policy is space exploration. Although he supported the America COMPETES Act of 2007, he voted against its reauthorization this year due to concerns over the cost of the legislation. Hall is also a vocal skeptic of climate change. In a statement released after his selection as chair, Hall said: "Our Committee will help ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested wisely in research and development programs by providing effective oversight of existing programs and by eliminating wasteful and duplicative programs and streamlining programs where needed."

Sensenbrenner will play a supporting role to Hall. Sensenbrenner is currently the second most senior Republican on the panel. His promotion to Vice Chair may be a result of the discontinuation of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, where he is the Ranking Republican.

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) will serve as the Ranking Member of the House Science and Technology Committee. The current top Democrat, Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), is retiring. Johnson's interests in science policy include science education, increasing diversity within science, and space exploration. In a statement released last month, Johnson outlined her priorities for the committee: "As Ranking Member, I would continue to advocate for STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics] education, clean energy, and for scientific research to improve the lives of all Americans. . . . I would continue to emphasize the need to invest in basic scientific research and development to support our nation's energy independence and security, to create new technologies, industries, and jobs that will catalyze our nation's embattled middle class and fulfill a mission for the U.S. to lead the world in clean technology."

Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY) will serve as the new Chairman for the House Appropriations Committee. Rogers defeated bids by two other Republicans in his quest for the committee's top position, including a bid by the current Ranking Member Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA). The Republican Steering Committee did not grant Lewis an exemption from the House GOP's rule that Republicans may only hold the top committee spot (Chairman or Ranking Member) for six years. Rogers has pledged to ban earmarks in appropriations bills starting in fiscal year 2012, and is also considering voting on the federal budget on an agency by agency basis, rather than grouping agencies into 12 appropriations bills.

The top ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee is likely to be Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA). Chairman David Obey (D-WI), the current head of the panel, is retiring at the end of the 111th Congress. Obey has served as the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee since 1994. Dicks has previously served as Chairman of the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, where he championed increased funding for the Department of the Interior and the Environmental Protection Agency. He currently serves as Chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee.

Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA) will be the next Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. Hastings has served as the panel's Ranking Minority Member for two years. Although the environmental legislation he sponsored in the 111th Congress was mainly related to issues specific to Washington State, Hastings has outlined a broad agenda for the next session of Congress. "Like all committees, one of our top priorities on the Natural Resources Committee will be cutting spending and bringing fiscal sanity back to Washington, D.C.," Hastings said in a statement to the press. He also plans to address job creation through increased domestic energy production and the opening of public lands.

The ranking member of the Natural Resources Committee will be Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA). Although Markey has served on the committee since 1976, he has never been the senior Democrat. Markey is active on energy and climate policy, having served as Chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming for the past four years. He is a co-author of House-passed comprehensive legislation to address climate change.

### **OSTP Issues Scientific Integrity Policy**

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) issued guidelines on 17 December 2010 to ensure that research conducted by government scientists is not altered for political purposes. The new policy was released 18 months after the initial deadline set by President Obama.

"Science, and public trust in science, thrives in an environment that shields scientific data and analyses from inappropriate political influence; political officials should not suppress or alter scientific or technological findings," wrote Dr. John Holdren, Director of OSTP and the President's science adviser, in the memo setting forth the policy.

The policy outlines four principles for the foundations of scientific integrity in government: 1) ensuring a culture of scientific integrity, 2) strengthening the actual and perceived credibility of government research, 3) facilitating the free flow of scientific and technological information, and 4) establishing principles for conveying scientific and technological information to the public. These guidelines include directives to federal agencies to hire scientists based primarily on their technical expertise and not their ideology, to subject scientific information to independent peer review when feasible, and to ensure protections for whistleblowers.

Government agencies are also directed to establish policies that "promote and facilitate, as permitted by law, the professional development of Government scientists and engineers." This includes encouraging the publication of research in peer-reviewed journals and the presentation of research at professional meetings, and allowing government scientists to fully participate in professional societies, including serving on task forces or on the governing board.

The policy addresses the communication of scientific information to the public and the use of federal advisory committees. Of note, the policy directive states that "[i]n no circumstance may public affairs officers ask or direct Federal scientists to alter scientific findings."

So far, the policy has received mixed reviews. Some groups have criticized the policy for lacking details and for not explicitly inviting public involvement as federal agencies develop their own policies to implement the government-wide policy. Federal agencies have 120 days to implement the new policy.

### **Legislative Update: IMLS Reauthorization and Plant Genetic Resources Treaty**

On December 22, President Obama signed into law a bill to reauthorize the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The legislation (S. 3984) increases funding authorizations for the agency's museum services to \$38.6 million in fiscal year 2011. This represents an increase of 14 percent above the fiscal year 2010 funding level.

According to the American Association of Museums, the law contains several provisions proposed by museums, including “enhanced support for conservation and preservation, emergency preparedness and response, and building statewide capacity. The bill specifically supports efforts at the state level to leverage museum resources, including statewide needs assessments and the development of state plans to improve and maximize museum services throughout the state.”

On December 14, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the “International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.” The treaty, which went into force in 2004, aims to ensure food security throughout the world through the conservation, exchange, and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. According to the letter of transmittal from President George W. Bush to the U.S. Senate in 2008: “The centerpiece of the Treaty is the establishment of a multilateral system under which a party provides access to other parties, upon request, to listed plant genetic resources held in national genebanks. These resources are to be used solely for purposes of research, breeding, and training in agriculture.”

Unfortunately, the Senate failed to act on the treaty prior to the chamber’s adjournment for the year. This means that the Committee on Foreign Relations must pass the treaty again in the next session of Congress before it can be considered by the full Senate. Although the United States signed the treaty when the treaty was originally crafted nearly ten years ago, we have yet to ratify it.

### **Opportunities for Graduate Students**

#### **- 2011 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award**

The American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) Public Policy Office is accepting application for the 2011 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA). This award recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences and science education who have demonstrated initiative and leadership in science policy. EPPLA recipients receive first-hand experience at the interface of science and public policy. The 2011 winners will receive an

expense paid trip to Washington, DC to participate in meetings with their congressional delegation, training and information on the federal budget and appropriations process, a certificate and 1-year AIBS membership, a complimentary 1-year subscription to *BioScience*, and a copy of *Communicating Science: A Primer for Working with the Media*.

The application deadline is 5 pm EST on 22 January 2010. Application information is available at [http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student\\_opportunities.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html).

### **- Collections Web Internships**

CollectionsWeb announces the availability of a research internship in collections-based research. The interns can be housed at

The purpose of the internships is to train students, create collaborations among museums and labs from different institutions, encourage the development of new tools and foster diversity. The research focus should include some component of collections-based study and should be interdisciplinary in nature.

Two internships are available and each will be paid \$4000 in financial support. To apply, the student should send a brief (1-2 page) proposal and current CV, along with a supporting letter from the mentor, to Karen Francl ([kfrancl@radford.edu](mailto:kfrancl@radford.edu)). All proposals will be reviewed by the CollectionsWeb Steering Committee.

Applications accepted through March 31, 2011.

### **- ASM/AIBS Policy Internship Available**

The American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) and American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) are pleased to announce the availability of an internship in the Washington, DC, AIBS Public Policy Office. The internship is open to ASM members who are currently enrolled in a graduate program and who are engaged in research that will contribute to the understanding and conservation of mammals. The internship is for 3 months during fall 2011, and carries a generous monthly stipend. Selection criteria include demonstrated interest in the public policy process, strong communications skills, and excellent academic record. For details and requirements, please visit [http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student\\_opportunities.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/student_opportunities.html).

### **Hold the Dates and Plan to Attend: 2011 SPNHC & NSC Alliance Annual Meetings**

Plans are now underway for the 2011 annual meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) and the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance). In 2011, NSC Alliance will meet in collaboration with SPNHC at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, CA from 23-28 May.

Details are still being developed, but NSC Alliance will convene a plenary program that considers aspects of federal science policy relating to natural science collections.

Additional information about this meeting will be available on the SPNHC and NSC Alliance websites in the coming months.

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The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org).

Note: You are receiving a copy of this electronic report as part of your membership in the NSC Alliance. Contact the Alliance office with any email address or member representative name changes send an email to [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).