

## **NSC Alliance Washington Report, Volume 2, Issue 4, April 7, 2011**

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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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### **Join Us for the 2011 NSC Alliance/SPNCH Joint Meeting**

Join the NSC Alliance and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections for their fourth annual joint meeting. The conference will be held 23-28 May 2011 in San Francisco, California. This year, the meeting will focus on "Sustainable Museums—Sustaining Collections," and will be hosted by the California Academy of Sciences in their Platinum LEED certified museum. The meeting website (<http://research.calacademy.org/spnhc>) provides information on the meeting program, lodging and transportation, and travel assistance grants.

In addition to the NSC Alliance Board of Directors and business meetings, scheduled for Tuesday, 24 May, the NSC Alliance has planned a plenary panel discussion on science policy. This panel will take place during the morning session of 25 May. A program on international issues, organized by SPNHC will take place during the afternoon of 25 May.

Visit <http://research.calacademy.org/spnhc> for more information and to register.

### **Government Shutdown Looming as Budget Negotiations Continue**

Federal lawmakers are struggling to reach a compromise on fiscal year (FY) 2011 funding for the federal government. Unless leadership from the White House, House of Representatives, and Senate negotiate a deal before midnight on 8 April, federal agencies will close and staff will be

furloughed. Of note to museum supporters, one of the first impacts on science and public outreach would be the closure of the Smithsonian Institution, including the National Museum of Natural History and the National Zoo. The closures would come during one of the peak periods of public visitation.

Some federal employees deemed to be essential, particularly in the areas of security, would be required to report to work. However, it is unclear whether they would be retroactively compensated. Many believe that the House of Representatives would be unwilling to compensate these federal workers once the government is re-opened.

Significantly, non-federal institutions would be affected, as federal agencies would be unable to process contract reimbursements, make new grant awards, hold peer-review panels, and so forth.

Currently, negotiations are occurring on how much to cut from the non-security budget in FY 2011, but Republicans in the House of Representatives are also pressing for inclusion of numerous social and environmental policy riders that are generally unacceptable to Democrats.

### **Action Alert: Tell Your Members of Congress to Pass a Budget**

Political bickering and inaction on the federal budget for fiscal year 2011 threatens to close the government and hurt the nation's economic recovery. If the federal government closes, some institutions and individuals may also suffer because of delays in government projects and contracts. Please take a few minutes to send a letter to your members of Congress and the President to urge them to pass a federal budget today. A prepared letter is available on the AIBS Legislative Action Center at [http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/news/ask\\_lawmakers\\_to\\_pass\\_a\\_federal\\_budget.html#030941](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/news/ask_lawmakers_to_pass_a_federal_budget.html#030941).

### **NSC Alliance Sponsors 3rd Annual Congressional District Visits Event**

The Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance) is pleased to announce that it is a Sponsor of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event this August. Among the other Sponsors and Supporters of the event are the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPHNC).

This nationwide event provides scientists with an opportunity to meet with their members of Congress in their own district rather than in Washington, DC, and allows elected officials to learn first-hand about the research facilities in their district. This is an important chance to show elected officials how science is conducted and to showcase the people, equipment and facilities that are required to support and conduct scientific research.

The 3rd Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event will be held throughout the month of August 2011.

Each August, Representatives and Senators spend time in their Congressional districts and home states. This event is an opportunity for scientists and representatives of research facilities to meet

with their member of Congress to demonstrate how science is conducted and why a sustained investment in research and education programs must be a national priority. Participating scientists will either meet with their elected officials at a district office or may invite them to visit their research facility.

Participants will be prepared for their congressional meetings by AIBS Public Policy Office staff. Training for this event will be conducted through an interactive webinar program. In addition, participants will receive information about federal appropriations for biological and environmental research, tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official, and resources to craft and communicate an effective message. The AIBS Public Policy Office will provide participating scientists with guidance and some assistance with scheduling meetings.

NSC Alliance encourages its members to plan to participate in this effort. Participation is free, but organizations are also encouraged to consider becoming a Supporter of this effort for \$250. Supporters will be recognized on the event's website and other event-related materials, including the free-online web training program for participants.

To register to participate or learn more about the event, please visit [http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional\\_district\\_visits.html](http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html).

### **Business, Academic, Scientific Leaders Call for Action on Deficit Reduction**

In recent months, it has become clear that the nation is divided about how to allocate a limited federal discretionary budget. Part of this debate has been spurred by growing concern over the long-term fiscal health of the nation. However, controlling discretionary spending will not fix the economic and budget problems facing the nation. Earlier this year, a bipartisan commission issued a report

([http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/TheMomentofTruth12\\_1\\_2010.pdf](http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/TheMomentofTruth12_1_2010.pdf)) proposing sweeping policy initiatives that could help stabilize the nation's economic and budget woes. The report has received some attention from policymakers, but has yet to be translated into law.

In a 31 March 2011 statement, six leading representatives from business, academia and science asked President Obama and congressional leaders to make "tough choices on the national deficit." According to the statement sent to President Obama and congressional leaders: "An effective deficit reduction plan cannot focus entirely on decreasing discretionary expenditures; it must also include tax reform, spending prioritization and actions to strengthen economic growth. Largely missing in the budget discussions to date are the entitlement programs, particularly the major ones: Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Any serious and sincere deficit reduction plan must include entitlement reform."

The statement was signed by:

- Norman R. Augustine, retired Chairman and CEO, Lockheed Martin Corporation and former Undersecretary of the Army;
- John Engler, President, Business Roundtable and former Governor of Michigan;

- Charles M. Vest, President, National Academy of Engineering;
- Robert M. Berdahl, President, Association of American Universities;
- M. Peter McPherson, President, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities; and
- Deborah L. Wince-Smith, President and CEO, Council on Competitiveness.

The group further argued: “Economic growth and job creation require federal investment to prepare our children with world-class educations and to support the scientific and technology research and innovation infrastructure that enable the private sector to create jobs and compete in the global economy. Americans must set priorities and share in the sacrifice required to put our fiscal house in order. This is consistent with the model discussed in the bipartisan majority report of the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibilities and Reform – the Bowles-Simpson commission. We applaud those bipartisan efforts now underway among some Senators to put a broad-based deficit reduction plan on the table, and we welcome the recent letter signed by 64 Senators calling for a ‘broader discussion about a comprehensive deficit reduction package.’”

### **President’s FY 2012 Budget Request for IMLS Would Cut \$39.6 Million**

The fiscal year (FY) 2012 budget request for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) was released on 14 February 2011. The President’s budget would fund IMLS at \$242.6 million in FY 2012, \$39.6 million less than the FY 2010 enacted level.

Museum services would receive \$30.8 million, a \$2.9 million decrease. Funding for Research, Analysis, Evaluation and Data Collection, a budget line that was recreated after the reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act of 2010 in December, would decrease to \$1.9 million.

The complete budget request for IMLS can be downloaded at [http://www.ims.gov/pdf/FY12\\_CJ.pdf](http://www.ims.gov/pdf/FY12_CJ.pdf).

### **NSF Dear Colleague Letter on Taxonomy and Systematics**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is seeking proposals for taxonomic work that will describe new species while training new taxonomists and taking advantage of new technologies. A recent “dear colleague” letter from NSF highlights the call for proposals.

Dear Colleague Letter: Advancing Revisionary Taxonomy and Systematics (ARTS)

The Cluster for Systematics and Biodiversity Science within the Division of Environmental Biology (see the program description at [http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm\\_summ.jsp?pims\\_id=503618&org=DEB&from=home](http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503618&org=DEB&from=home)) encourages the submission of proposals to conduct species-level taxonomic work and revisionary monographic research on particular groups of organisms, and to develop predictive classifications for those organisms. Such taxonomic work forms the fundamental basis of our understanding of planetary biodiversity and its evolutionary history. In addition, systematics and

taxonomy play increasing roles in crucial studies concerning conservation, ecological assessment, sustainable ecosystem management, and the effects of climate change on organismal distributions.

A major goal of this activity is to address the “taxonomic impediment” in biodiversity studies, that is, the scope of undescribed biodiversity relative to the human resources and tools available to address that problem. Factors that exacerbate this impediment include the loss of taxonomic specialists with specific organismal expertise and the declining numbers of students broadly trained in organismal and taxonomic research. On the other hand, technological and cyberinfrastructure developments have poised us to revolutionize the way taxonomic and revisionary work can be accomplished. We encourage proposals that will develop novel and transformative approaches to address these challenges, and that will help prepare future generations of broadly trained organismal biologists and systematists to pursue these approaches. Successful proposals will simultaneously provide innovative research to accelerate taxonomic documentation and syntheses, as well as broad systematic training.

Continue reading the letter at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=364>.

### **Fall Meeting Announced for Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Review Committee**

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Review Committee plans to meet on 8-9 November 2011 at the University of Nevada-Reno. The agenda for this meeting will include the presentation, discussion, and adoption of the draft Review Committee Report to the Congress for 2011; appointment of the subcommittee to draft the Review Committee’s report to the Congress for 2012, and discussion of the scope of the report; National NAGPRA Program reports; and the selection of the date and site for the spring 2013 meeting. In addition, the agenda may include requests to the Review Committee for a recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior regarding the disposition of Native American human remains determined to be culturally unidentifiable; presentations by Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, museums, Federal agencies, and the public; requests to the Review Committee for review and findings of fact related to the identity or cultural affiliation of human remains or other cultural items, or the return of such items; and the hearing of disputes among parties convened by the Review Committee.

The Review Committee is soliciting presentations by Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, museums, and federal agencies on the progress made, and any barriers encountered, in implementing NAGPRA. The Review Committee also will consider other presentations by Indian tribes, Native Hawaiian organizations, museums, federal agencies, and the public. A presentation request must, at minimum, include an abstract of the presentation and contact information for the presenter(s). Presentation requests must be received by 23 August 2011.

For more information, visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2011/2011-4959.htm>.

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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).