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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.

For Membership Review: Proposed NSC Alliance Board Slate

Additional Nominations Accepted Until 15 August 2011.

Annual NSC Alliance Board elections are getting underway, as per the NSC Alliance Bylaws (http://nscalliance.org/?page_id=16), which state:

“The Nominating Committee shall furnish the names of nominees to the Secretary, who shall circulate them either in written or electronic form (e.g., web site) to the members at least thirty (30) days in advance of the election in order to provide for additional names to be nominated by the membership. Nomination to the ballot from the membership requires written support from 10 members from any category of membership.”

Visit <http://nscalliance.org/?p=390> to view the proposed slate. Additional nominations (with written support from 10 members) may be sent to the Nominating Committee Chair, William Brown, at wbybrown@gmail.com.

Nominations will close on 15 August 2011.

NSF Announces Digitization Award Recipients

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded four grants through its Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections (ADBC) program. The NSC Alliance has previously expressed strong support for this new NSF grant program.

One award will establish a National Resource for Digitization of Biological Collections to integrate data from biological research collections around the United States. It will establish and disseminate best practices, coordinate outreach and training activities, assess gaps in information and new technologies for specimen digitization, and ensure that information is accessible online to the public and to biological researchers. This grant was awarded to Dr. Larry Page of the University of Florida Museum of Natural History.

Three collaborative awards will allow for the creation of Thematic Collections Networks (TCNs) to digitize data from biological research collections, and to make the data available online. Each of the three TCNs focuses on a "grand challenge" question in biodiversity. The TCN awards include participation from 92 institutions in 45 states. The three TCNs are titled:

- InvertNet--An Integrative Platform for Research on Environmental Change, Species Discovery and Identification
- Plants, Herbivores and Parasitoids: A Model System for the Study of Tri-Trophic Associations
- North American Lichens and Bryophytes: Sensitive Indicators of Environmental Quality and Change

"This program will markedly increase the accessibility of valuable information residing as 'dark data' in collections to researchers, educators and the public, and will stimulate new research across many fields of science and engineering," said Joann Roskoski, acting director of NSF's Directorate for Biological Sciences.

More information is available at

http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=121015&WT.mc_id=USNSF_51&WT.mc_e v=click.

House Advances 2012 Funding Bill for NSF

On 7 July, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science approved a bill that would fund the National Science Foundation (NSF) at \$6.859 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2012. This is the same amount the agency received in FY 2011, but \$907 million less than President Obama requested.

Despite the flat budget for NSF as a whole, Research and Related Activities would receive an additional \$43 million. This increase would come at the expense of Education and Human Resources (\$26 million decrease) and Major Research Equipment and Facilities Construction (\$17 million decrease). Funding for Agency Operations and Award Management would be unchanged from FY 2011.

The proposed funding level may be a disappointment to some, but others in the scientific community feel grateful that NSF was not subjected to deeper cuts. Funding for the Departments of Commerce and Justice and for related agencies would decline by 3 percent below FY 2008, under the House proposal. “Despite a 6 percent lower allocation than in fiscal year 2011, this bill increases funding for research accounts at [National Institute of Standards and Technology] and NSF,” said subcommittee Chairman Frank Wolf (R-VA). “Investments in scientific research are critical to long-term economic growth and job creation.”

The full Appropriations Committee is scheduled to consider the draft bill on 13 July.

NSC Alliance Comments on NAGPRA Regulations

On 29 June, NSC Alliance provided comments in response to a request for public input on a discretionary review of current Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) regulations. Visit <http://nscalliance.org/?p=383> to read the NSC Alliance comments.

NSC Alliance Writes to New York Governor, Education Officials about State Museum

On 7 July 2011, the NSC Alliance sent letters to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and state education officials expressing strong concerns about a recent announcement of staff reductions at the New York State Museum. “The loss of five professional-level Museum Scientist positions, including the State Archaeologist and four Curators (one of which serves as State Paleontologist), will devastate research and collections care in archaeology, geology, and paleontology, making it impossible for the Museum to carry out its core legislated mandates: collections stewardship, research, and education related to the natural and cultural history of the state,” wrote NSC Alliance President William Brown.

Read the letters to Governor Cuomo, New York State Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch, and the Acting Commissioner of Education John King, Jr. at <http://nscalliance.org/?p=389>.

Act Now: Ask Congress to Promote, not Politicize, Science

The United States House of Representatives will soon consider the fiscal year (FY) 2012 appropriations bill that will fund the National Science Foundation. Some in Congress have recently sought to attack programs within NSF, including mocking specific grants based on titles and inadequate information.

The National Science Foundation is the only federal agency that invests in all fields of fundamental research. It is important that the scientific community stand together to oppose

efforts to weaken NSF, the scientific merit review process, or scientific disciplines that may be viewed as politically unpopular.

Please take a few minutes to send a letter to your Representative to urge that s/he promote, not politicize, NSF. Take action on the American Institute of Biological Sciences Legislative Action Center at <http://capwiz.com/aibs/issues/alert/?alertid=51009501>.

National Science Board Seeks Nominations for New Members

The National Science Board (NSB) is seeking nominations for candidates to serve six-year terms starting in 2012. Candidates should have a record of distinguished service; credibility in the scientific, technological, engineering, industrial, public sector, and educational communities; and demonstrated leadership in their field.

The NSB is comprised of 25 members who serve as a policymaking body for the National Science Foundation and as an advisory body to the President and Congress on science and engineering issues. NSB members are nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Members represent a variety of scientific and engineering disciplines and geographic areas.

The deadline to submit a nomination is 12 August 2011. More information is available at <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/members/nominations.jsp>.

Help Shape the Future of IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is developing a strategic plan to guide its work and priorities over the next five years. On 15 July, the agency will post highlights of the draft plan for public feedback at <http://www.ims.gov>.

The new plan will help IMLS to rigorously examine all of its grant programs, research, and leadership initiatives and to focus on results. Public input is sought to shape IMLS programs and services to most effectively meet public needs.

Deadline Approaching: Sign Up to Showcase Science to Policymakers This August

NSC Alliance is proud to announce that it is a Sponsor of the 3rd Annual Biological Sciences Congressional District Visits event.

This national initiative is an opportunity for scientists across the country to meet with their members of Congress to showcase the people, facilities, and equipment 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, when Representatives and Senators spend time in their Congressional

districts and home states. This event is an opportunity for scientists, graduate students, representatives of research facilities, and people affiliated with scientific collections to meet with their members of Congress without traveling to Washington, DC. Participants may either invite their elected officials to visit their facility or can meet with the policymaker at the local congressional office.

Participants will be prepared for their congressional meetings through an interactive training webinar. Individuals participating in this event will receive information about federal funding for biological research, tools for improving their communication skills, and tips for conducting a successful meeting with an elected official.

Participation is free, but registration will close on 15 July 2011. For more information and to register, visit http://www.aibs.org/public-policy/congressional_district_visits.html.

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.

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.